

# CIVIL SERVICES EXAMINATION focus

MONTHLY NOTES BY RAU'S

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PERCEPTION INDEX 153

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## CURRENT AFFAIRS ANALYSIS

logical . simple . targeted  
analysis & explanation  
of relevant news

## ETHICS, INTEGRITY & APTITUDE

Coverage from  
varied  
sources

## ESSAYS OF THE MONTH

Selected essays  
from Rau's  
GSI students

# FEBRUARY 2024



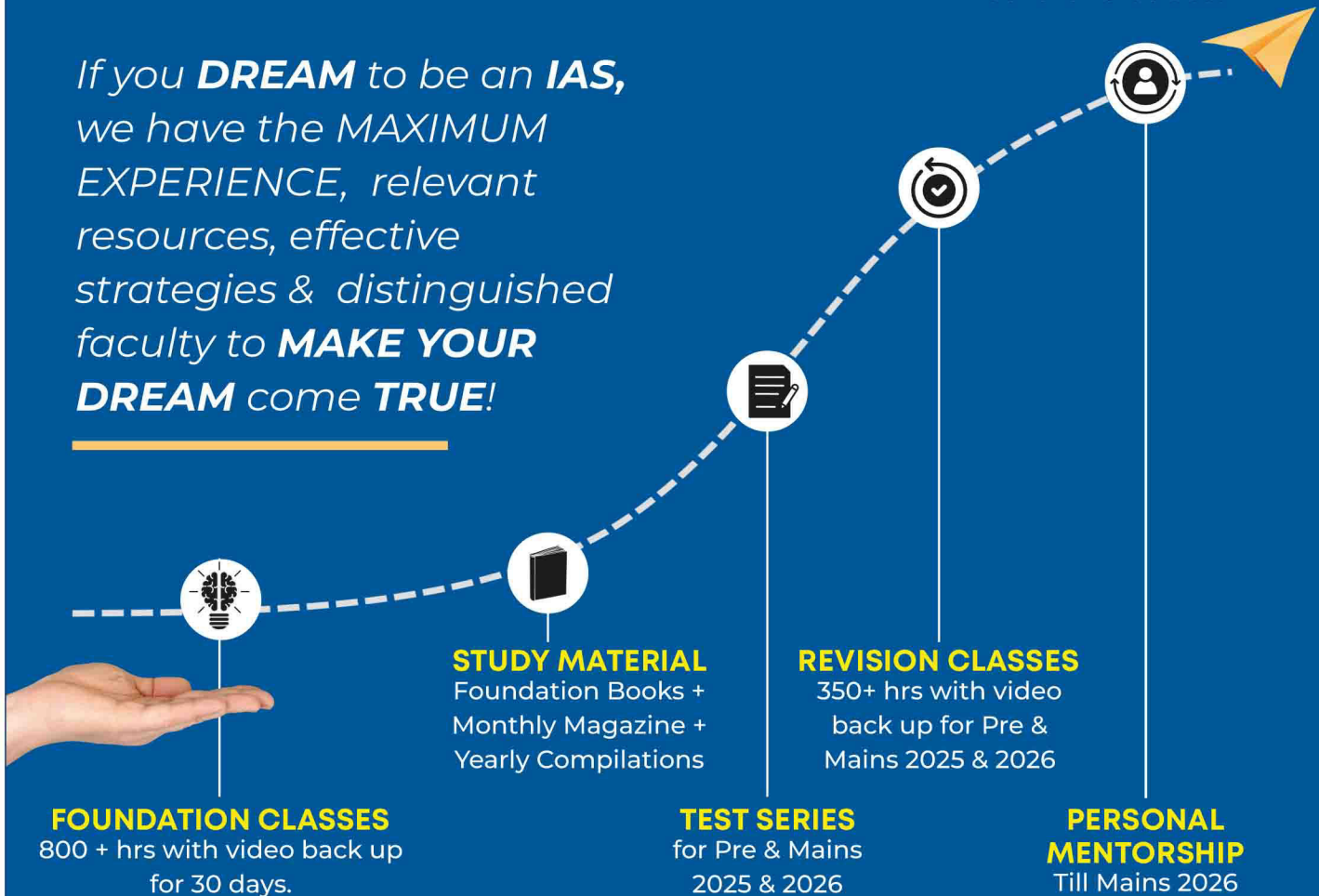
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# How to Excel in UPSC Prelims?

UPSC prelims is the second stage of an aspirant's journey to the famed steel frame of Indian bureaucracy, first being the finding the will, zeal and determination to enter the civil services. Every year more than 12 lakhs candidates fill the form for UPSC civil services, more than 5 lakhs appear in the exam, only about 10 lakhs qualify to write the next stage, the mains exam.

Prelims exam is essentially an exam of elimination. Candidates final scores in the prelims is of no consequence in the final ranks. Even if a candidate scores 200 out of 200 marks in the Paper I of Prelims he gets no edge over a candidate who is just qualifying prelims with marks marginally above the cut-offs. The goal therefore should be to clear the cut-offs and get to write the mains.

One more peculiar reality of the prelims exam is that there is no well-delineated syllabus for this stage unlike what UPSC has for the mains exam. The syllabus given by UPSC for this stage is very open ended which allows UPSC to literally ask anything under the sun. The depth and vagueness of questions asked by UPSC in recent years for the prelims exam has increased in recent years. The effect of this is that cut-offs for writing mains have fallen. They have consistently remained below 100 marks.

As the Prelims exam of UPSC is scheduled in 5th of June of this year, this is the right to discuss few strategies to smarten our preparation.

## **A method for madness**

Any strategy to be workable needs to be robust and based on real experiences. A thorough analysis of past papers

reveals that there are some sections of the UPSC prelims syllabus, where reward is much more as compared to some other sections. We will go through this:

- **Polity & Governance:** About 15 to 20 questions come from polity section. The questions from this section seem to be predictable with most directly from the Constitution itself. Doing the basic textbook such as Laxmikanth and the Bare text of Constitution is essential for this section. In recent year, UPSC has been asking questions on concepts related to political theory such as liberty, equality etc. This should be done by NCERT for Political theory. Questions from governance section are not predictable and often tough. However, no extra special efforts or source should be done for these. A smart student should have 80-90% accuracy in this section which is doable as sources are fixed and can be revised and mastered.
- **History & Culture:** About 20% of the questions in the UPSC prelims papers are from history & culture section. Out of these 10 questions are from the period of modern history (freedom struggle particularly), other 10 are distributed among ancient history, medieval history and art & culture. Students face difficulty in the ancient history, medieval history and art & culture part of the syllabus. It is advised that old ncerts (R. S. Sharma and Satish Chandra for Ancient and Medieval history respectively) are effective for this section. History chapter of Lucent's General Knowledge is also a good source to revise Ancient & Medieval History quickly and effectively.

●For Modern History, Spectrum's textbook of Modern History is very comprehensive and favourite among aspirants. In recent years, UPSC has increased toughness of questions from this section. However, a diligent candidate should aim to correctly solve 50-70% of the questions from this section. If the above sources are done thoroughly and revised diligently it is possible particularly on questions from freedom struggle.

- **Economics:** Economics accounts for anything between 15-20% of the questions. The questions in economics are of two types: first on core concepts and their interpretation and some current affairs topics. For conceptual understanding should thoroughly develop a deep understanding of NCERT textbook of Macro-economics. This book covers most of the topics. For current affairs any good monthly or yearly compilation can be done. If a candidate has good understanding of economics, scoring marks here is easy. Candidates with command on economics even score 90% in economics questions. Candidates therefore should aim to excel in this section, giving a lot of tests is very effective particularly in economics.
- **Geography & Environment:** The weightage of this section has seen a marked increase in recent years, together geography and environment accounts as much as 30% of the questions. Questions on environment are particularly challenging with UPSC asking about initiatives, global bodies and science behind environmental issues. It is very difficult for the candidates to follow these on their own. The best strategy here would be to follow some good compilations provided by coaching institutions. If done thoroughly students will be able to solve easier questions from this section. Geography static can be effectively done from NCERTs of class XI and class XII. This section is very unpredictable and students should approach it with strategic sense. The aim should be to do all the easier and predictable questions and be prepared to not attempt some questions.
- **Science & Technology:** In recent years, UPSC has been giving lot of emphasis on topics related to science & tech. There is a general lack of emphasis on these topics, which renders aspirants armless in the real exam. Also, the general understanding that science

topics are only for students with science background also keeps many candidates to not engage with these questions. However, if a candidate develops some understanding with basic science and prepare thoroughly the current affairs related to science 5-6 questions out of the 10-15 from this section can be done. Most of the questions from the science section are rooted in current affairs which should be done thoroughly.

### **Utility of Test Series**

Test Series is an effective tool for preparation of the prelims exam. However, there should be clarity on part of the candidate how can they extract maximum utility of it. A candidate should ideally approach the test series in the following manner:

A score in the test series is not something to be proud of. A better approach of test series is to understand where we are getting things wrong. Giving tests diligently will inform us of topics where we lack preparation and understanding, the smaller details that we might have overlooked. If these gaps are filled, our chances of success in the real exam increases.

Also, test series will expose us to many topics that we might not have come across while preparing from the standard sources. Candidates should incorporate these topics as additional information, that can be of some use in the real exam.

Test series also helps to master how we plan to utilise our time in the real prelims exam, which questions to attempt which to leave, when to attempt a guess etc.

On the day of the exam, we should be clear about these issues.

### **A Strategy for the Last Month**

Allocate two to three days for revising both fundamental and current affairs for each of the subjects. This can be done in a 15-day cycle twice.

Go through previous year questions of UPSC, they are especially useful in Polity, History, Economy concept related questions.

Keep solving test papers after every few days.

Perform to your best levels.

Regards  
**JAIKRIT VATSAL**  
Executive Editor,  
Focus Magazine

# focus

## CRITICAL NOTES FOR THE PREPARATION OF GENERAL STUDIES PAPERS

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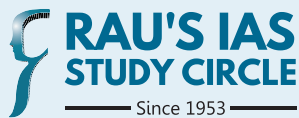
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The purpose of Focus is to expound the applied nature of General Studies to Civil Services aspirants thereby making them aware of the real demand of UPSC exam.

The sources relied for selection and analysis of issues are:

- |                                  |                       |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. The Hindu, The Hindu (Sun.)   | 2. The Indian Express |
| 3. The Times of India            | 4. Asian Age          |
| 5. The Tribune                   | 6. The Economic Times |
| 7. Hindu Business Line           | 8. Frontline          |
| 9. Economic and Political Weekly | 10. IDSA              |
| 11. BBC                          | 12. Yojana            |
| 13. Kurukshetra                  | 14. Down to Earth     |



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Dear Students,

FOCUS is the Study Circle's monthly publication of contemporary issues and current affairs analysis. It is in fact a collective effort, by experienced educators in varied themes, of identifying current affairs in light of the UPSC syllabus, supplementing them with background information, explaining their related dimensions, lending them a generalist viewpoint and thus producing critical notes for the preparation of General Studies' syllabus.

The publication, as the name suggests, focuses solely on issues which are relevant to the **factual** as well as **applied** aspects of the General Studies' syllabus. That is how Focus covers all anticipated issues and themes for the upcoming Civil Services Examination (CSE).

### Features

#### PART ONE | CURRENT AFFAIRS ANALYSIS

- This month edition covers analysis of news from the immediately preceding month.
- All news/issues are categorized and clubbed syllabus-wise (International Relations, Polity & Governance, Science & Technology, Ethics, Integrity & Aptitude and so on) for efficient study.
- Background information has been added to provide context.
- Related and Additional information-dimensions have been explained to add depth to your understanding.
- Maps and figures have been provided for associative and retentive learning.
- Practice Questions

#### PART TWO | ETHICS, INTEGRITY & APTITUDE

- Coverage from varied sources

#### PART THREE | ESSAYS FOR YOU

- Selected essays from Rau's GSI students

For further understanding or discussion in any topic, please consult your respective professors.

**Good Luck!**

**RAU'S IAS STUDY CIRCLE**



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# **PART ONE**

# **CURRENT AFFAIRS**

**logical .simple .targeted  
analysis & explanation  
of all relevant news of the month**

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

# GS PAPER (PRELIMS) & GS PAPER III (MAIN)

## K-SHAPED ECONOMIC RECOVERY IN INDIA

#INCLUSIVEGROWTH

PRIMARY  
SOURCE

The Indian  
EXPRESS

SECONDARY  
SOURCE

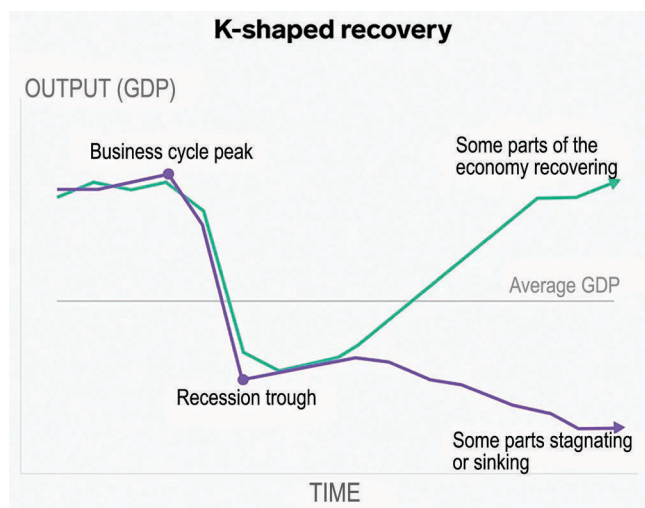
moneycontrol

State Bank of India's report has rejected the claims of K-shaped economic recovery in India because income inequality has declined in India with a higher tax base and a shift in taxpayers from lower income to higher income tax bracket.

### DIFFERENT TYPES OF ECONOMIC RECOVERY

#### K-shaped

- It is a recovery in which the performance of different parts of the economy diverges like the arms of the letter "K."
- In a K-shaped recovery, some parts of the economy may experience strong growth while others continue to decline.



#### V-shaped

- It is characterised by a quick and sustained recovery in measures of economic performance after a sharp economic decline.

- Because of the speed of economic adjustment and recovery in macroeconomic performance, a V-shaped recovery is a best-case scenario given the recession.

#### U-shaped

- U-shaped recoveries happen when a recession occurs and the economy does not immediately bounce back, instead tumbling along the bottom for a few quarters.
- It is similar to a V-shaped recovery but more prolonged.

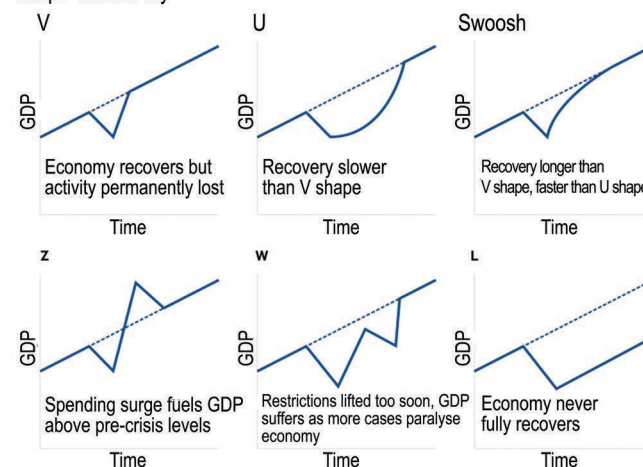
#### W-shaped

- A W-shaped recovery is when an economy passes through a recession into recovery and then immediately turns down into another recession.
- Hence, it is also known as a double-dip recession.
- W-shaped recessions can be particularly painful because the brief recovery that occurs can fool investors into getting back in too early.

#### L-shaped

- It occurs when, after a steep recession, the economy experiences a slow rate of recovery.
- L-shaped recoveries are characterised by persistently high unemployment, a slow return of businesses' investment activity, and a sluggish rate of growth in economic output.
- They have been associated with some of the worst economic episodes throughout history.

#### Shape of recovery

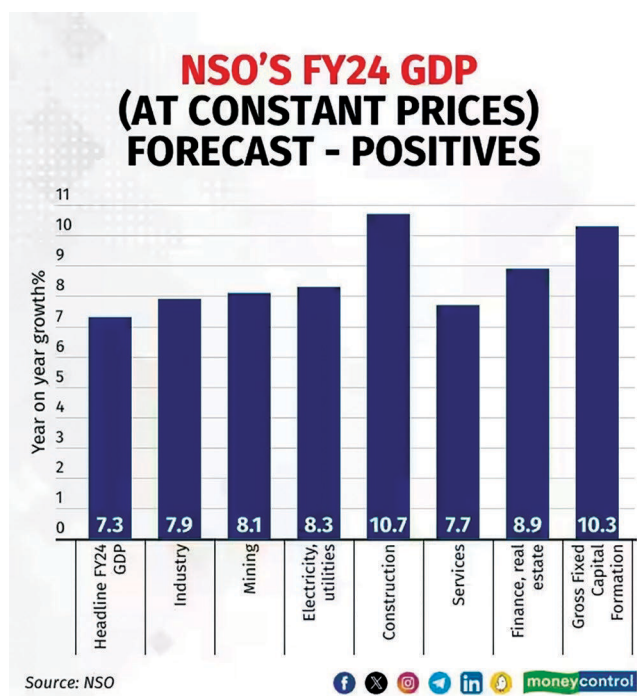




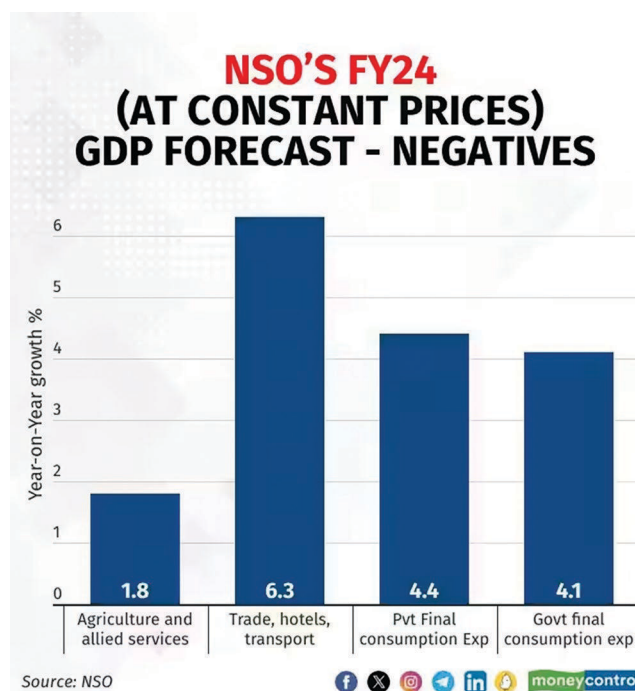
## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### WHY CLAIMS FOR K-SHAPED RECOVERY?

- **Impact of Covid-19:** The COVID has triggered an effective income transfer from the poor to the rich thereby increasing inequality.
  - **Households at the top of the pyramid** are likely to have **seen their incomes largely protected**, and savings rates forced up during the lockdown, increasing 'fuel in the tank' to drive future consumption.
  - Meanwhile, **households at the bottom** have **experienced a permanent loss of income** in the forms of jobs and wage cuts.
  - This will be **demand-impeding** because the **poor have a higher marginal propensity to consume** (ie they tend to spend (instead of saving) a much higher proportion of their income).
- **Uneven Economic Growth:**
  - The growth forecast for FY 2023-24 expects **strong growth in industry, mining, electricity and services sectors**. From the expenditure side, **growth in Gross Fixed Capital Formation (GFCF)** will propel the GDP. Passenger vehicle registrations (proxying upper-end consumption) have grown about 4%.



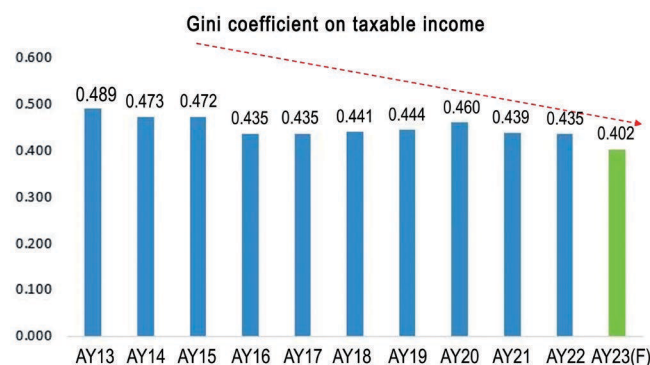
- While on the other hand, all the **employment generating sectors** such as agriculture, trade, hotels, transport and communication **are lagging**.



### • **Weak Rural Demand:**

- The weak rural growth and sputtering urban demand is reflected in the **poor consumption growth**.
- **Two-wheelers and tractor sales** (proxy for rural demand and consumption) have **contracted** 15%.
- Private Final Consumption Expenditure (PFCE) is seen up by only 4.4%.
- This can only mean that **growth is not trickling down to the lower echelons, thereby increasing inequality**.

### EVIDENCE ON THE CONTRARY



- **Reduced Income Inequality:** The Gini coefficient, also known as the Gini index or Gini ratio, is a measure of economic inequality in a population. The gap between different income levels, measured by the Gini

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

coefficient of taxable income, decreased notably from 0.472 to 0.402 from FY14 to FY22 respectively.

- **Increased Consumption of the bottom 90%** of the population has increased by Rs 8.2 lakh crore post pandemic. By 2030, 50% of the consumption will be accounted for by these 90%.
  - Rising popularity of food ordering platforms across latitudes indicates vanishing inequality.
- **Widened Tax Base:** The number of ITRs filed by people earning between Rs 10 lakh and Rs 25 lakh increased by 291% while the total number of persons filing income tax increased to 7.4 crore in AY(Assessment Year)'23 from 7 crore in AY22. For AY24, 8.2 crore ITRs have been filed by December 31, 2023.
- **Shift in taxpayers from Lower Income to Higher Income Tax Bracket:** About 36.3% of individual ITR filers belonging to an income group of less than Rs 3.5 lakhs in AY15 (FY14) have left the lowest income group and shifted upwards resulting in 21.3% additional income.
- **Higher Income Tax Returns:** The income-tax returns (ITRs) filed by individual taxpayers earning between Rs 5 lakh and Rs 10 lakh, climbed by 295% between the assessment years (AY) 2013-14 and AY 2021-22, showing a positive trend of migration to a higher range of gross total income.
- **Declining Contribution by the Highest Taxpayers:** The top 2.5% of taxpayers' contribution in income declined from 2.81% in FY14 to 2.28% in FY21.
- **Transition into Larger Firms:** Around 19.5% of majorly micro-sized firms have been able to shift their income upwards. This indicates MSME units are getting bigger and getting integrated into larger value chains with initiatives like PLI.
- **Rising Female Labour Force:** PLFS (Periodic Labour Force Survey) data shows female labour force participation has risen from 23.3 in 2017-18 to 37 in 2022-23, marking an increase of 13.7.
- **Rising Sale of 4-Wheelers:**
  - Two-wheeler sales are on a downward trend and passenger vehicle (4-wheeler) sales are on an upward trend even before the pandemic as there has been a clear preference for 4-wheelers over 2-wheelers.
  - Further, the strong credit deployment of auto loans touching nearly 1.8 times the pandemic level,

supported by Gross NPAs of vehicle loans at just 1.4% signifies that auto loans are not down or non-performing, it is indeed **substituted from two wheelers towards 4 wheelers even for the bottom of pyramid.**

#### WAY FORWARD FOR A BROAD BASED RECOVERY TO ADDRESS INEQUALITY

- **Economic Growth:** In India, Private consumption expenditure is the biggest driver of economic growth. However, due to reduced social sector spending by the government over a few years and the recent COVID induced lockdowns reduced the consumer demand. So, **increased social sector spending by the government will increase consumer demand** thereby economic recovery. Ensure last-mile-delivery of Welfare Schemes such as PM Awas Yojana, PM KISAN, PM Jan Arogya Yojana.
- **Demographic Dividend:** Spending on human capital will help India reap the benefits of demographic dividend. Leverage Technology to ensure E-Learning, E-Governance and Tele-Medicine reaches the remote corners of the country.
- **Reducing Poverty and Hunger:** Reduced social sector spending by the governments force the poor to spend more on non-food essential items squeezing their food budget and ultimately results in Hunger and malnutrition. This will further reinforce poverty.

## MICROFINANCE SECTOR IN INDIA

#INCLUSIVEGROWTH

PRIMARY  
SOURCE

NABARD

SECONDARY  
SOURCEReserve Bank  
of India

*Bangladeshi Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus has received a six-month jail sentence in Bangladesh for violating the country's labour laws. The 83-year-old is renowned for pioneering microfinance loans to assist impoverished individuals.*

#### UNDERSTANDING MICROFINANCE

- Microfinance is a **financial service providing small loans** and other financial assistance to **low-income households**.
- It serves as an economic tool to promote financial inclusion, enabling impoverished households to escape

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

poverty, elevate their income levels, and enhance overall living standards.

- Institutions offering microfinance services, known as Microfinance Institutions (MFIs), operate independently due to the **unique characteristics of microfinance**, such as **high transaction costs, short loan durations, frequent repayments, lack of collateral**, and **relatively higher default rates**.
- These MFIs are **regulated either as Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs) by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) or through the Companies Act of 2013**.

### MICROFINANCE COMPONENTS

- **Microcredit:** Involves providing very small loans to borrowers lacking collateral, steady employment, or a verifiable credit history. It supports small-scale entrepreneurship, poverty alleviation, and empowerment, delivered through various channels.
- **Micro Insurance:** Offers low-premium, low-coverage insurance tailored for low-income individuals, covering risks like crop and livestock damage.
- **Micro Savings:** Targets individuals with low incomes and savings, providing accounts for small deposits with low minimum balance requirements and no service charges.

### STATUS OF MICROFINANCE IN INDIA

- As of March 31, 2023, the SHG-Bank Linkage Programme in India covers 16.2 crore households through 134 lakh SHGs, with savings deposits totalling ₹58,893 crore.
- 257.92 lakh JLGs have been provided with credit to the tune of Rs. 4.59 lakh crore. Whereas, NABARD Grant assistance of Rs. 319.83 crore was sanctioned to facilitate promotion of 14.44 lakh Joint Lending Groups (JLG).

### BENEFITS OF MICROFINANCE

- **Credit to Low-Income Borrowers:** Provides credit to those with low incomes and assets, aiding small entrepreneurs in impoverished regions.
- **Collateral-Free Loans:** Eliminates the need for collateral, enabling individuals with minimal assets to access credit.
- **Financial Inclusion:** Assists populations unable to access traditional banking institutions.
- **Income Generation:** Empowers small entrepreneurs, facilitating income improvement.

- **Women Empowerment:** Fosters financial independence for women, as seen in the SHG-Bank Linkage Programme benefiting 119 lakh SHGs, with 87% comprising women.
- **Rehabilitation:** Extends financial access in conflict zones, aiding rehabilitation efforts.
- **Rural Development:** Stimulates economic activity in rural areas, creating livelihood opportunities.

### CHALLENGES IN MICROFINANCE

- **Financial Illiteracy:** Lack of awareness about MFIs and their services among the poor.
- **Funding Generation Difficulty:** Limited access to funds due to the non-profit nature of many MFIs.
- **Heavy Dependence on Banks:** Dependency on short-term funds from private banks, leading to asset-liability mismatch.
- **Weak Governance:** Lack of transparency in governance, hindering attraction of capital.
- **Interest Rate Concerns:** Some MFIs charge high interest rates, posing challenges for low-income borrowers.
- **Regional Imbalances:** Unequal geographical growth of MFIs and SHGs, with concentrated credit linkages in certain states.

### STEPS TO PROMOTE MICROFINANCE IN INDIA

- **Government Programmes:** Initiatives like SHG-Bank Linkage Programme, Micro Enterprise Development Programme (MEDPs), Livelihood and Enterprise Development Programme (LEDP), and Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE).
- **Financial Support by NABARD and SIDBI:** Support for MFIs through grants, revolving funds, and equity.
- **MUDRA:** Establishment of Micro Units Development & Refinance Agency Ltd (MUDRA) to provide financial support to MFIs.
- **Regulatory Initiatives:** Introduction of regulations for NBFC-MFIs by RBI.

### WAY FORWARD

- **Comprehensive Regulation:** The microfinance sector requires a comprehensive regulatory framework for sustainable development.



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- **Interest Rate Transparency:** MFIs should transparently communicate interest rates and additional charges to borrowers.
- **Encourage Microfinance Penetration:** Financial assistance to MFIs for expanding into underserved areas will enhance outreach.
- **Expand Product Range:** MFIs should diversify their offerings to include credit, savings, remittance, financial advice, and non-financial services.
- **Use of Technology:** Adoption of new technologies to reduce operational costs.
- **Different Funding Sources:** Exploration of alternative funding sources, such as conversion to for-profit companies.

## CONCLUSION

While the microfinance sector has contributed to inclusive development, challenges persist, including regional disparities and rising bad loans. A comprehensive regulatory approach, transparent interest rate practices, increased penetration, diversified product offerings, technological integration, and diverse funding sources are crucial for ensuring the sector's inclusivity and sustainability.

## GOVERNMENT DEBT

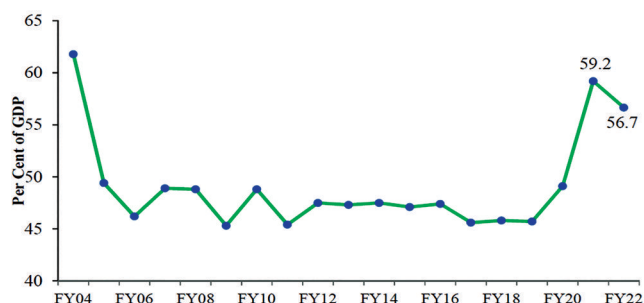
#FISCALPOLICY

PRIMARY SOURCE: Reserve Bank of India  
SECONDARY SOURCE: THE HINDU

Recently the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has raised concerns about the long-term sustainability of India's debts.

## STATUS OF GOVT DEBT IN INDIA

- **Central government's debt stood at 57% of GDP** at the end of March 2023 (**General government debt is around 85% of GDP**) and the ratio of public debt to GDP is expected to increase over the next financial year.



- The IMF has cautioned that general government debt is likely to exceed 100% of India's gross domestic product (GDP) in the near future.
- In this context let us discuss the need for managing public debt in India and how far India's debt levels are sustainable.

## SUSTAINABILITY OF INDIA'S DEBT CAN BE ASSESSED BY THE FACTORS

- **Low Currency Risk:** Till March 2021, 95% of Government's total net liabilities were denominated in domestic currency, and 5% constituted sovereign external debt, implying low currency risk.
- **Low Interest Risk:** Till March 2021, Public debt in India was primarily contracted at fixed-interest rates, with floating internal debt constituting only 1.7% of GDP, thus, insulating debt portfolio from interest rate volatility.
- **Maturity of Debt:** Over the last few years, the proportion of dated securities maturing in less than five years has declined, whereas long-term securities have shown an increasing trend, thus reducing rollover risk in the medium-term.
- **Stable Government's Debt Profile** without undue pressure on yields as majority of outstanding debt of government(G-secs) is subscribed by commercial banks, insurance companies and provident funds.
- **Interest Rate Growth Differential:** IRGD refers to the difference between the average interest rate that governments pay on their debt and the (nominal) growth rate of the economy. This has been negative for India which implies higher growth rate viz-a-viz interest rate, hence, public debt comes with low fiscal costs and an eventual decline in debt-to-GDP ratio.

## NEED TO MANAGE PUBLIC DEBT

While Government borrowing is necessary to stimulate growth and aggregate demand by spending in welfare measures and capital asset development, high debt-to-GDP ratio isn't good for long term macroeconomic stability of the country

- **Statutory Obligation:** FRBM Act, 2018 recommended ratio to be 40% (Centre) & 20% (States) by 2024-25, which is consistent with international best practices.
- **Interest Burden:** In FY22, interest payments accounted for 20% of Centre's total expenditure. Using substantial resources for interest payment (Revenue Expenditure) of previous debt reduces government

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

funds available for investment in infrastructure (Capital Expenditure) and critical public services.

- **Cost of Borrowing:** Accumulation of large amounts of debt can erode government's credibility in financial markets and lead to higher interest rates on new borrowings.
- **Crowding Out of Private Investment:** If the government borrows excessively, it competes with private borrowers for available funds in the financial market. This leads to higher interest rates for borrowing and may discourage the private sector from taking loans.
- **Downgrading of Credit rating - Affects Investor Confidence Leading to Capital Flight:** High-level of public debt can erode investor confidence and this may lead to reduction in both Foreign Institutional and Foreign Direct Investments.
- **Inflationary Pressures:** Excessive borrowing from the Central bank can lead to increase in money supply which in turn can cause inflationary pressures.
- **Fiscal Repression of Commercial Banks:** When a commercial bank invests more in GSecs (where it earns lesser interest than commercial loans)

### STRATEGY FOR ENSURING SUSTAINABILITY OF GOVERNMENT DEBT

- **Consolidating Debt Management Functions:** Establishing a debt management office would consolidate all debt management functions in a single agency and bring in holistic management of the internal and external liabilities as against the existing fragmented debt management jurisdiction under various institutions such as:
  - Reserve Bank of India – Domestic Marketable Debt i.e., dated securities, treasury bills and cash management bills.
  - Ministry of Finance (MOF); Office of Aid and accounts Division – external debt
  - Ministry of Finance; Budget Division and Reserve Bank of India – Other liabilities such as small savings, deposits, reserve funds etc.
- **Establishing an Independent Fiscal Council** to prepare multi-year fiscal forecasts for the central and state governments, define a sustainable level of public debt and provide an independent assessment of the central govt's borrowing & fiscal performance.

- This will help **check competitive populism** and an institutional mechanism will **bring in transparency** by promoting the culture of proper disclosures & good accounting practices within the Government.

### CONCLUSION

International experience suggests that a fiscal council improves the quality of debate on public finance, and that, in turn, helps build public opinion favourable to fiscal discipline. This instils confidence among domestic & foreign investors and improves policy outcomes.

## IMPORTANCE OF DIRECT BENEFIT TRANSFERS (DBT)

#FISCALPOLICY #INCLUSIVEGROWTH

PRIMARY SOURCE The Indian EXPRESS

*Election season often witnesses promises made by political parties for direct transfers of monetary benefits. This emphasises the importance of effective implementation for such direct benefit transfer programs and poses the question of whether direct transfers are a viable alternative to government subsidies.*

### WHAT ARE SUBSIDIES?

- A subsidy is a direct or indirect payment to individuals or firms, usually in the form of a cash payment from the government with an **aim to keep the price of a commodity or service low**.
- The **Indian government provides subsidies across sectors**, including agriculture, food distribution, fuel, social welfare, export promotion, power, education, healthcare, and housing, with initiatives such as fertiliser and crop insurance subsidies, LPG subsidies, direct benefit transfers, export incentives, power and renewable energy subsidies, scholarships, medical subsidies, and housing interest subsidies.
- In terms of outlays, **the central government spends around 6% on subsidies**.

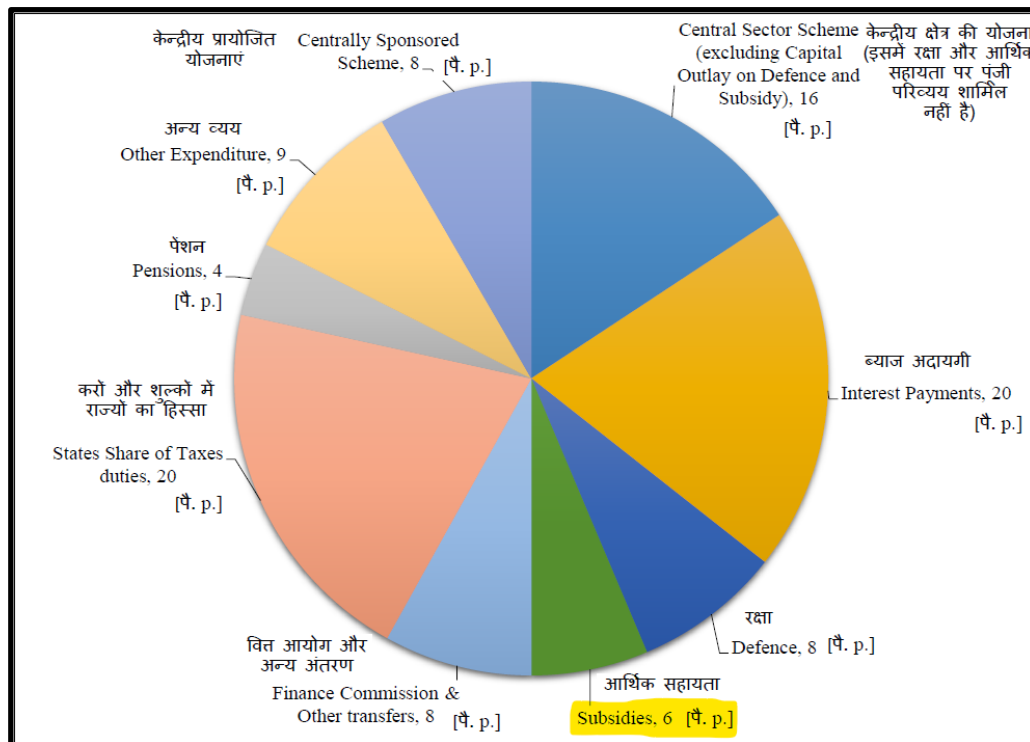
### MAIN CHALLENGES IN THE PRE-DBT ERA SUBSIDIES

- **Leakages:**
  - It was a significant concern, as beneficiaries were not accurately identified, leading to ghost beneficiaries or duplications.
  - Lack of proper verification mechanisms allowed for the inclusion of ineligible recipients, resulting in

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

resources being diverted away from the intended beneficiaries.

- According to a World Bank report, leakages in the Public Distribution System (PDS) were estimated to be as high as 40% in some states before the implementation of DBT.



- Middlemen and Corruption:** It often led to corruption and diversion of funds. The manual processes involved in subsidy distribution provided opportunities for corrupt practices, as middlemen exploited loopholes in the system.
- Inefficient Targeting: (Inclusion and Exclusion Error)**
  - The traditional subsidy system's imprecise targeting mechanisms resulted in the provision of subsidies to individuals who did not genuinely require them, leading to the dispersion of financial resources broadly rather than reaching those who needed them the most. At the same time a lot of deserving beneficiaries could not be included.
  - The Socio-Economic and Caste Census 2011 highlighted the inefficiencies in targeting, with a large number of undeserving households receiving subsidies.
- Delays in Payment:**
  - The conventional subsidy system was often plagued by delays in the disbursement of funds to the beneficiaries.

- Delays in subsidy payments could have severe consequences for individuals dependent on those funds, particularly in sectors like agriculture.

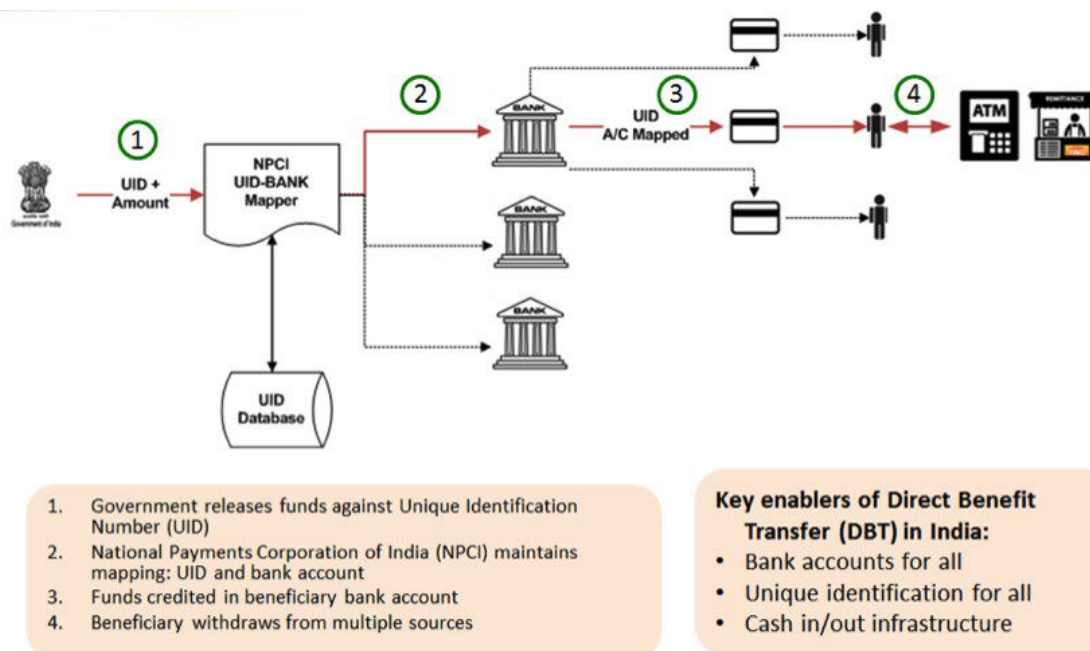
- Lack of Transparency:** It was evident in the absence of real-time tracking mechanisms for subsidy distribution.
- Financial Burden on Government:** The Economic Survey of India 2014-15 pointed out that the subsidy burden on the government was unsustainable, with leakages contributing to the fiscal strain.

## WHAT ARE DIRECT BENEFIT TRANSFERS (DBT)?

- The DBT (Direct Beneficiary Transfer) is a scheme, where the **welfare benefits provided by the Government are directly credited to the bank accounts of the accurately identified beneficiary.**
- The introduction of Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) addressed these challenges by **leveraging Jan Dhan Bank Accounts, Aadhaar, and mobile number (JAM Trinity)** to streamline subsidy distribution, reduce leakages, and enhance the overall efficiency of welfare programs.
- Various studies and reports have since highlighted the **positive impact of DBT** in curbing corruption,

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

improving targeting, and ensuring that subsidies reach the intended beneficiaries effectively.



## ADVANTAGES OF DBT MECHANISM

- **Reduction in Leakages:** DBT mechanism reduces the leakages of welfare benefits.
- **Inclusive:** Providing welfare benefits through cash transfer directly to the bank accounts of the beneficiaries is more inclusive compared to the in-kind benefits as it can cover more beneficiaries overcoming the geographical/ topographical challenges.
- **Cost-Effective:** Providing subsidies through cash transfers is cost-effective as it avoids the logistic costs involved in distribution of subsidised goods. For example: The government estimated a gain of nearly ₹37,000 crore during the financial year 2019-20 through the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) mechanism.
- **Choice to the Beneficiary:** Rather than providing welfare benefits in-kind/subsidised goods, DBT provides choice to the beneficiary to purchase goods or service of his choice from the market.
- **Addresses Regressive Nature of Some Subsidies:** Most of the subsidies are regressive in nature benefiting the richer households more than the poor. Earlier LPG subsidies benefited the rich more than the poor as the rich consumed more LPG cylinders than the poor households. Introduction of DBT enabled the government to put a ceiling on the subsidy benefits provided to a household.

- **Doesn't Distort the Market:** Many subsidies provided in India involve price interventions. Such price interventions can distort the incentives of producers to increase their efficiency.
  - E.g. Fertiliser subsidies disincentive many vintage fertiliser plants to improve their efficiency as they are assured of getting compensated for the difference between the cost of production and government's determined subsidised price. The inefficient firms fail to optimally utilise scarce resources like Natural gas.

## CHALLENGES IN THE DBT REGIME

- **Inclusion/Exclusion Errors:** Status of beneficiary is dynamic. The aim of social protection is to ensure that person comes out of below poverty at some point of time. But absence of continuous evaluation of schemes and their beneficiaries results in providing benefits to unintended beneficiaries. For example, most of the welfare benefits provided today are based on the Socio Economic Caste Census (SECC) survey conducted in 2011.
- **Misutilization:** The DBT mechanism for providing welfare benefits are often criticised for their potential misuse by the beneficiary, as there is a chance that the cash is not utilised for the intended purpose.



**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

- **Inflation:** Providing subsidies through direct cash transfer schemes may give more choice for the beneficiaries to consume goods and services from the market, but expose them to market volatilities like inflation.

**CONCLUSION**

- Such direct benefit transfers have the potential to create a virtuous development cycle in a country. Families with an assured, though small, income begin to take small risks by investing in their future: buying better seeds to try to increase farm production, purchasing goods that can be resold locally, or even spending more time looking for better jobs.

## PUSH FOR CAPITAL EXPENDITURE

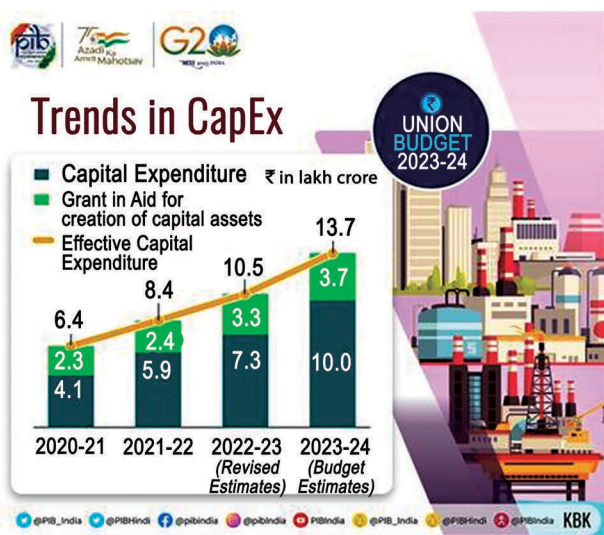
#GOVERNMENT BUDGETING #INFRASTRUCTURE

PRIMARY SOURCE | pib

States have been focusing more on the capital expenditure in 2023-24. The capital outlay of states jumped 45.7%. Whereas the quality of their expenditure — ratio of capital outlay to total expenditure stands at 14.1%, an eight year high, during this period.

**TRENDS IN CAPITAL EXPENDITURE IN INDIA**

To catalyse economic growth, Union Budgets in the recent past have enhanced the Capital Expenditure to ensure multiplier effect, boost both demand and supply, crowd-in private sector investment, revive the animal spirits and kickstart the Indian economy.



For instance, the Union Budget of 2023-24 aimed to make capital investment as a driver of growth and jobs:

- **Increase in Capital Expenditure:**

- To ramp up the virtuous cycle of Investment and job creation the budget steeply **increased the capital expenditure outlay by 37.4%** in BE 2023-24 to a whopping Rs.10 lakh crore. This shows that **capex is almost 3 times of the capital expenditure in FY 2019-20.**
- It magnifies the government's thrust on infrastructure development through enhanced capital expenditure.

- **Financial Assistance to States for Capital Expenditure:**

- To strengthen the hands of the States in the spirit of cooperative fiscal federalism, the scheme for providing financial assistance to the States for capital expenditure introduced in FY 2022-23 has been extended in FY 2023-24, with the enhanced outlay of Rs.1.30 lakh crore. This **represents an increase of 30% over BE 2022-23 allocation.**

**WHY THE NEED FOR CAPITAL EXPENDITURE PUSH?**

- **Revive Economy:** In India, capital expenditure multiplier is around 2.45, while revenue expenditure multiplier is 0.99 (RBI Bulletin, Dec 2020). Thus, for a Rs. 1 crore increase in capital expenditure, GDP increases by Rs. 2.45 crores, whereas if there is a 1 crore increase in revenue expenditure, the GDP increases only by Rs.0.99 crore.
- **Crowd-in Private sector Investment** as Government expenditure on creation of capital assets would boost demand for Goods and services produced by the Private sector entities.
- **Shift gears from Consumption driven to Investment driven economy** as recommended by Eco Survey 2019-20.
- **Plug gaps in Infrastructure:** India needs to spend \$4.5 trillion on infrastructure by 2030 to sustain its growth rate. Higher Capital expenditure would lead to creation of world class infrastructure in terms of Roads, railways, ports etc.
- **Reduce Logistics Cost and Boost Make in India:** Higher Capital expenditure would help us bring down the logistics cost from around 12%-14% of the GDP to the global benchmark of around 8-10% of GDP. Boost Employment Creation: Higher Capital expenditure



would create more employment opportunities, enable people to earn their livelihoods and boost demand in the economy.

#### CONCERNS AND CHALLENGES IN CAPEX PUSH

The ability of capital expenditure to boost long-term growth is saddled with multi-faceted challenges.

- **Neglect of Immediate Needs of People:** According to some economists, instead of providing benefits to the people in the form of cash transfers, free ration, Education, healthcare etc. to deal with Covid-19 pandemic, the Government ends up giving more emphasis on creation of capital assets.
- **Problem of Time Lag** as the increase in the capital expenditure would not have immediate impact on the economy.
- **Multiplier Effect May Not Come into Being** as the private sector may not increase its investment due to fear of lower GDP growth rates and lower rate of returns. Similarly, due to unforeseen circumstances prevailing in the economy, people may decide to save money instead of spending leading to decline in demand.
- **Crowding Out Private Sector Investment** due to higher government borrowings.
- **Time and Cost Overrun** in completing infrastructure projects could lead to lower rate of returns and hence make the projects financially unviable.
- **Poor Quality of Asset Creation** can lead to higher recurring expenditure on maintenance.

#### WAY FORWARD

The government spending has rightly prioritised Capital Expenditure.

- However, the Government must **address some of the constraints** such as time and cost overruns, improving Ease of Doing Business etc.
- At the same time, new initiatives such as **Development Banks and National Monetisation Pipeline** must be implemented in the right earnest.
- The government should also aim to **cut down on inefficient revenue expenditure** and **focus on creating a balanced and stable virtuous cycle**, which can have positive knock-on effects over the long term.

## RBI ON STATE GUARANTEES

PRIMARY  
SOURCE THE HINDU

*The debt of many State Governments is rising to alarming levels in recent times. Concerns are getting compounded by the **guarantees** given by State governments to banks and other financial institutions to make them lend to the State government and its enterprises. In this context, RBI has come up with a working paper.*

#### WHAT ARE STATE GOVERNMENT GUARANTEES

Guarantee is a type of contingent liability of a State protecting the investor/lender from the risk of default by a borrower.

- Guarantees are usually sought when the investors/ lenders are unwilling to bear the risk of default.
- **Indian Contract Act:** A contract of guarantee is a contract to perform the **promise or discharge the liability of a third person in case of default**.
  - A guarantee contract is different from an **indemnity contract** in which there are two parties involved and one party promises to save the other from loss caused by the promisor, or by the conduct of any third party.

#### CONCERNS ARISING FROM THE STATE GUARANTEES

State government guarantees have crossed **₹9 Lakh Crore in FY23**, and since this lending is **not reflected in the fiscal deficit** numbers and the economic health of these enterprises are weak, there are risks of these liabilities exploding in the future.

- **Moral Hazard:** Such guarantees may lead to moral hazard, since guaranteed entities are sub optimal in performance and fulfilling obligations. Investors and lenders might lack incentives for due diligence, especially compared to non-recourse project financing.
- **Fiscal Risks:** Negative impact on the fiscal/financial position of the State Government. Macroeconomic shocks and realisation of contingent liabilities can amplify fiscal risks for State Governments.
- **Off-Budget Borrowing:** Such off-budget borrowing, since not subject to the annual ceiling set by the Central Government, becomes an explicit liability for the State Government. Despite being a liability, it is not reflected as debt in budgetary documents.
- **International Advocacy and Fiscal Policy:** International institutions, including the IMF, advocate

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

fiscal transparency and accountability to identify, monitor, and minimise fiscal risks. Prudent fiscal policy must address three areas related to guarantees:

- Exposure to guarantees and policies for managing exposure.
- Ensuring disciplined issuance of guarantees through data disclosure.
- Effective management of risks associated with guarantees.
- **Global Practice:** Many countries globally are disclosing data on guarantees in budget documents or government reports in response to recognizing the inherent risks.

## RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE WORKING PAPER

- **Definition of Guarantees:** There should be no distinction between Conditional/Unconditional, Financial/Performance guarantees in assessing fiscal risk.
  - Broad use of the term 'Guarantee,' should encompass instruments creating obligations for future payments.
- **Guidelines for Guarantee Policy:** Follow Government of India guidelines for formulating **State Guarantee policy**.
  - Limit guarantees to principal and normal interest of the underlying loan.
  - No guarantees for external commercial borrowings or private sector entities.
  - Restrict guarantees to 80% of project loans, with conditions imposed by lenders.
  - Specify pre-conditions for guarantees, e.g., period, fee, representation on boards, mortgage, periodic reporting.
- **Purpose of Government Guarantees:** Clearly define purposes aligning with General Financial Rules for financial viability, concessional loans, and socio-economic benefits. Avoid using guarantees to obtain finance through state-owned entities or create direct liabilities.
- **Risk Categorization:** Classify projects as high, medium, or low risk, considering past defaults. Maintain risk weights, with a conservative approach keeping the lowest slab at 100%. Disclose methodology for assigning risk weights.
- **Ceiling on Guarantees:** Paper has recommended a reasonable ceiling for incremental guarantees to avoid fiscal stress.

- Ceiling at 5% of Revenue Receipts or 0.5% of GSDP, whichever is less.

- Use nominal value compared to risk-weighted value for the ceiling.

- **Guarantee Fee:** Charge a guarantee fee reflecting the riskiness of borrowers/projects, with a minimum base fee of 0.25% per annum. Add a risk premium based on the state's risk assessment, linked to the tenor of the underlying loan.
- **Reserve Fund:** Encourage states to join the **Guarantee Redemption Fund (GRF)** for advantages, including access to short-term funds from RBI. Recommend contributions to build GRF to 5% of total outstanding guarantees over five years, maintained on a rolling basis.
- **Administrative and Institutional Mechanism:** State undertakings to set up escrow accounts for possible shortfalls in project earnings. Establish a Monitoring Unit (MU) at the state level for tracking and continuous monitoring of guarantees.
- **Disclosure Standards:** Publish data on guarantees as per **Indian Government Accounting Standards (IGAS)** for uniformity and consistency. Suggest RBI advising banks/NBFCs to disclose credit extended to state entities backed by guarantees.
- **Honouring of Guarantees:**
  - Highlight the importance of timely honouring guaranteed obligations to avoid reputational and legal risks.
  - Stress the potential impact on state finance if guarantees are not promptly honoured, affecting lenders' confidence.

## NATIONAL ASSET RECONSTRUCTION COMPANY LIMITED (NARCL)

#MOBILISATIONOFRESOURCES #BANKING



*India's Bad Bank, the National Asset Reconstruction Company Ltd (NARCL) heralded as the panacea for the nation's burgeoning nonperforming asset (NPA) crisis. However NARCL is grappling with many challenges.*

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### BASICS OF BAD BANK

- Understanding the concept of a Bad Bank is crucial to evaluating NARCL's role.
- Bad bank is an entity that **consolidates a bank's bad loans** or non-performing assets (NPAs) and **works towards resolving or liquidating these stressed assets** to recover maximum value.

### PROS OF BAD BANK

- **Improvement in the bank's balance sheet** of the Banks due to decrease in the NPAs.
- **Unlocking of bank capital** that was earlier locked up as provisioning requirements. This would lead to an **increase in the credit creation**.
- **Enables banks to focus on their core areas** of accepting deposits and lending loans. The function of recovery of bad loans gets transferred to the specialist Bad Bank.
- **Effective Coordination:**
  - Most of the NPAs are concentrated in the larger borrowers who have taken loans from multiple banks.
  - Presently, such Banks come together to form the Committee of Creditors (CoC) and formulate a resolution plan to recover the NPAs. However, such a mechanism is presently facing problems of coordination and delays in the recovery of NPAs.
  - Setting up of Bad Bank would enable the multiple Banks to transfer their NPAs simultaneously to Bad Bank and improve their balance sheets

### CONS OF BAD BANK

- **Moral Hazard:** The Bad Bank stands ready to buy NPAs from the Banks. Hence, this would discourage the Banks from exercising due caution in lending loans.
- **Transferring NPAs:** According to Ex-RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan, the Setting up of Bad Bank would **merely lead to transfer of Assets from one entity to another**.
- **Mismanagement in PSBs:** The NPAs of Banks have increased on account of a number of reasons such as Political interference in working of Banks, Increase in wilful defaulters, poor recovery process etc. Hence, Bad Bank does not solve the core underlying reasons which led to increase in NPAs in the first instance. The Bad Bank is thus considered to be a superficial solution to the underlying problem of NPAs.

- **Dilemma over pricing of NPAs:** Higher pricing of Loans Loss to ARC. Lower pricing of Loans Loss to Banks.
- **Delays in recovery** of NPAs by the ARCs.

### DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BAD BANK AND NATIONAL ASSET RECONSTRUCTION COMPANY LIMITED (NARCL)

- **Ownership:** The Bad Bank, initially proposed by the Economic Survey 2016-17 was to be set up and owned by the Government. However, NARCL has been set up by banks themselves.
- Since the nature of roles performed by them is the same, the terms "Bad Bank" and "ARC" can be used interchangeably.

### NATIONAL ASSET RECONSTRUCTION COMPANY LIMITED (NARCL)

- Asset Reconstruction Companies are registered with the RBI under the provisions of SARFAESI Act.
- NARCL has been **incorporated under the Companies Act** and has received a certificate of registration from the RBI to commence the business of an Asset Reconstruction Company.
- NARCL will **majorly be owned by Public Sector Banks**. Canara bank is the Sponsor with shareholding of up to 12 per cent.
- NARCL would be **capitalised through a combination of equity and debt from various Banks** and will have a finite life of 5 years.

### INDIA DEBT RESOLUTION COMPANY LTD. (IDRCL)

- It has been set up as Asset Management Company (AMC) to deal with NPAs.
- It will have a minimum of 51% ownership of Private sector Banks and balance will be held by Public Sector Banks.
- The term of IDRCL shall be coterminous with that of NARCL, i.e., 5 years.

### RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NARCL AND IDRCL

- NARCL and IDRCL's relationship will be defined through a **debt management agreement** where NARCL will aggregate and acquire the stressed assets and IDRCL will provide stressed assets management and resolution services to NARCL on an exclusive basis.

### DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ARC AND AMC

- ARC buys Bad loans from Banks and then transfers them to the AMC.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- The AMC would then carry out restructuring to recover the bad loans.
- The AMC would be manned by professionals who have necessary expertise in recovering the Bad loans.

### HOW NARCL DEALS WITH STRESSED ASSETS?

- **Step 1:** The NARCL would buy NPAs from the Banks. The Money is paid to the Banks in the form of **Cash and Security Receipts. 15% of money is paid in form of Cash and 85% in form of Security Receipts (SR).** The SARFAESI Act provides for the issuance of Security Receipts.
- **Step 2:** Decrease in NPAs on Banks' Balance Sheets--> Lower Provisioning--> Capital gets unlocked--> Increase in Credit Creation--> Economic growth.
- **Step 3:** The NARCL-IDRCL recovers the NPA either through Debt restructuring or sale of mortgaged assets.
- **Step 4:** The NARCL makes the payment for the security receipts after deducting its management fee.
- **Role of the Government:**
  - The Government has decided to give guarantee worth Rs 30,600 crores on the payment of security receipts by the NARCL.
  - If the NARCL is unable to sell the bad loan, or sold it at a loss, then the government guarantee will be invoked and the difference between what the bank was supposed to get and what the NARCL was able to raise will be paid from the Rs 30,000 crore that has been provided by the government.

### CHALLENGES FACED BY NARCL

- **Lower Onboarding of Bad Loans:** As of September, 2023, NARCL had made binding offers for 30 accounts, with a total debt exposure of ₹1,69,910 crore. However, it had onboarded only four accounts with an exposure of ₹23,663 crore. While these figures seem substantial, they are a mere fraction when compared to the overall size of the Indian banking system and the NPA challenge it faces.
- **Human Resources:** In the past 12 months, the institution witnessed four top management changes, raising concerns about its operational stability.
- **Apprehension of Banks:** Most of the NPAs that NARCL is looking at are vintage NPAs — three years, four years, and so a lot of value erosion has already happened.

Hence, banks are often hesitant to sell NPAs to NARCL due to perceived low values.

- **Other Challenges:** The absence of a vibrant secondary market for SRs and a robust turnaround mechanism for purchased assets undermines confidence among private investors.

### WAY FORWARD

Based upon the Global experiences in countries such as US, China, Sweden etc., we need to adopt following strategies to ensure success of NARCL:

- **Increasing liquidity of Security Receipts:** The desired levels of success of bad banks will greatly depend upon **building a secondary market for SRs. Widening the scope of SR participants** to include high net worth individuals (HNIs), trusts, pension funds, and corporate bodies.
- **Role of the Government:** Banks need incentives and regulatory support to participate actively in the ARC process. Government can aid in addressing concerns about the impact on balance sheets, by **providing financial incentives, tax benefits, or regulatory relaxations to encourage banks to engage more proactively** in the Bad Bank's resolution process.
- **Well-Capitalised NARCL:** Successful Bad Banks across the world were well-capitalised, which in turn enabled them to take up on the NPAs. Hence, NARCL needs to be well-capitalised to take over NPAs worth Rs 2 lakh crores.
- **Realistic Valuation of NPAs:** Usually, Banks recover only around 10-15% of the fully provisioned loans and haircuts are as high as 85-90%. Hence, Banks should transfer NPAs to NARCL at realistic value.
- **Time Bound Resolution of NPAs:** Delays in recovery of NPAs would lead to delay in payment of Security Receipts to the Banks and hence adversely affect their financial position.
- **Professional Expertise:** The NARCL and IDRCL need to have the highest level of professional expertise and calibre to solve NPA mess in a time bound and efficient manner. Fixed and longer tenures of top management will help bring operational stability in NARCL.
- **Reforms in PSBs:** The setting up of Bad Bank without focussing on reforms in PSBs would mean that the fundamental problems that led to NPAs in first place continue to remain. Hence, recommendations of P.J.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Nayak Committee on setting up of Banking Investment Committee has to be expedited.

## VARIABLE REPO RATE (VRR)

#MONETARYPOLICY #PRELIMSNIPPETS

PRIMARY SOURCE BusinessLine

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) will infuse liquidity amounting to ₹2.50-lakh crore via a 15-day variable rate repo (VRR) auction as the overall liquidity deficit in the banking system has widened.

### REPO RATES

- It is the **rate at which Banks borrow money from the RBI** for one day, also known as overnight borrowing.
- Through Repo Rate, RBI enhances liquidity (availability of money) in the economy as more money is flown from RBI to Banks and in turn to the economy.
- Increase in liquidity helps the economy to grow, though it will increase inflation in the economy.

### VARIABLE REPO RATE (VRR)

- When RBI desires to infuse liquidity in the economy but Banks are not eager to borrow from RBI at Repo Rates as interest rates in the economy may already be lower.
- Under VRR, the RBI allows Banks to **borrow at a rate decided by the market generally lower than Repo Rate** (though not less than Reverse Repo Rate) for duration more than One Day.

## ECONOMIC ACTIVITY INDEX (EAI)

#NATIONALINCOME #GSPAPER3

PRIMARY SOURCE Reserve Bank of India

RBI's economic activity index (EAI) has nowcast GDP growth for Q3 (October-December) FY24 at 7 per cent, according to an article in the central bank's latest monthly bulletin.

### WHAT IS THE ECONOMIC ACTIVITY INDEX (EAI)?

- The economic activity index is an **efficient predictor of advanced quarterly GDP estimates** of the NSO.

- This index uses **twenty-seven monthly indicators** representing industry, services, global and miscellaneous activities to gauge the underlying state of the economy.
- These indicators, directly or indirectly, **cover a wide spectrum of domestic activities**.
- Many central banks have developed **"nowcasting" models**, which are **used to predict** the present, the very near future and the very recent past almost **on a real time basis using regular high-frequency data releases on activity indicators**.

TABLE: HIGH-FREQUENCY INDICATORS

Industry	Services	Global	Miscellaneous
IIP	Domestic air passenger traffic	US Industrial Production	Gross taxes
Automobile sales (Total)	Domestic air cargo traffic	Baltic Dry Index	Job Speak Index
Non-oil exports	Port cargo traffic	US Purchasing Managers' Index -Mfg.	Non-food credit
Non-oil-non-gold imports	Railway freight	OECD Composite Leading Indicator	Broad Money (M3)
Purchasing Managers' Index -Mfg.	Foreign tourist arrivals	US payrolls	Consumer Price Index - non-food
Power supply	Purchasing Managers' Index - Serv.		Crude prices (average of Brent, Dubai and WTI)
Tractor sales	Fuel consumption		
	Cement production		
	Steel consumption		



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

## WHY THE NEED?

- Official GDP estimates are available with a lag of almost two months and these delays pose constraints on optimal policy decisions.
- In this regard, high frequency indicators of economic activity, which are available with shorter lags, offer an alternative for real-time tracking of the economy to aid forward-looking policy.

## PULSES

#AGRICULTURE #MAJORCROPS #PRELIMSNIPPETS

PRIMARY  
SOURCE

pib

India is set to become the world's largest producer of lentil (masoor) during the 2023-24 crop year on account of higher acreage. Despite being among the world's top five lentil growers, second only to Canada, it depends on imports to meet its domestic demands.

## ABOUT PULSES

- Pulses are annual leguminous crops yielding between one and 12 grains or seeds of variable size, shape and colour within a pod, used for both food and feed.



## • Importance:

- **High Protein Content:** Pulses are 20 to 25 percent protein by weight which is double the protein content of wheat and three times that of rice.
- **Nitrogen Fixation:** Besides serving as an important source of protein for a large portion of the global population, pulses contribute to healthy soils and climate change mitigation through their nitrogen-fixing properties.

- India is the largest producer (25% of global production), consumer (27% of world consumption) and importer (14%) of pulses in the world.
  - **Demand:** About 28mt.
  - **Production:** 26 MT for the 2022-23 crop year.
- **Major Pulses Grown & Consumed in India:**
  - Bengal Gram (Desi Chickpea/Desi Chana)
  - Pigeon Peas (Arhar/Toor/ Red Gram)
  - Green Beans (Moong Beans)
  - ChickPeas (Kabuli Chana)
  - Black Matpe (Urad/Mah/Black Gram)
  - Red Kidney Beans (Rajma)
  - Black Eyed Peas (Lobiya)
  - Lentils (Masoor)
  - White Peas (Matar)
- **Pulses account for around 20 percent of the area under food grains and contribute around 7-10 per cent of the total foodgrains production** in the country.
- Though pulses are grown in both Kharif and Rabi seasons, **Rabi pulses contribute more than 60 per cent of the total production.**
- **Gram is the most dominant pulse having a share of around 40 per cent in the total production** followed by Tur/Arhar at 15 to 20 per cent and Urad/Black Matpe and Moong at around 8-10 per cent each.
- Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Karnataka are the **top five pulses producing States.**

## BITCOIN ETFs

#MOBILISATIONOFRESOURCES #PRELIMSNIPPETS

PRIMARY  
SOURCE

THE HINDU

Regulators have approved the first US-listed exchange traded funds (ETFs) to track the Bitcoins. It is seen as a landmark move that could broaden its appeal to investors.

## WHAT ARE ETFs?

- An exchange-traded fund (ETF) is a type of pooled investment security that operates much like a mutual fund.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- It can be structured to track anything from the price of an individual commodity to a large and diverse collection of securities.
- ETFs can thus contain many types of investments, including stocks, commodities, bonds, or a mixture of investment types.
- **ETF share prices fluctuate all day as the ETF is bought and sold; this is different from mutual funds, which only trade once a day after the market closes.**

## PENSION FUND REGULATORY AND DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (PFRDA)

#INCLUSIVEGROWTH #PRELIMSNIPPETS

PRIMARY  
SOURCE pibSECONDARY  
SOURCE pfrda.org.in

*The Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) notified the Point of Presence (PoP) Regulations 2023, simplifying the registration process with the objectives of ease of doing business and greater usage of digital mode.*

### ABOUT PFRDA

- Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) is a **statutory regulatory body** set up under PFRDA Act with an **objective to promote old age income security and protect the interests of NPS subscribers.**
- PFRDA is regulating NPS, subscribed by employees of Govt. of India, State Governments and by employees of private institutions/organisations & unorganised sectors.
- **Nodal Ministry:** It operates under the jurisdiction of the **Ministry of Finance** in the Government of India.
- **Organisational Structure:** The Authority consists of a **Chairperson and not more than six members**, of whom at least three shall be whole-time members, to be appointed by the Central Government.

### SCHEMES MANAGED BY PFRDA

- **Atal Pension Yojana (APY):**
  - A pension scheme launched by the Government of India is focused on the unorganised sector workers.

- Under the APY, minimum guaranteed pension of Rs. 1,000/- or 2,000/- or 3,000/- or 4,000 or 5,000/- per month will start after attaining the age of 60 years depending on the contributions by the subscribers for their chosen pension amount.
- The contributions under Atal Pension Yojana are invested as per the investment guidelines prescribed by PFRDA.
- **National Pension System (NPS):**
  - It is a pension cum investment scheme launched by Government of India to provide old age security to Citizens of India.
  - It brings an attractive long term saving avenue to effectively plan your retirement through safe and regulated market-based return.
  - National Pension System Trust (NPST) established by PFRDA is the registered owner of all assets under NPS.

## EXPORT CREDIT GUARANTEE CORPORATION (ECGC)

#EXTERNALSECTOR #PRELIMSNIPPETS

PRIMARY  
SOURCE THE HINDU

*Centre is looking to expand the Export Credit Guarantee Corporation (ECGC) cover to exporters of gems and jewellery.*

### ABOUT EXPORT CREDIT GUARANTEE CORPORATION (ECGC)

- It is **wholly owned by the Government of India** and was set up in 1957 with the objective of promoting exports from the country.
- The insurance covers provided by ECGC **enables the banks to extend timely and adequate export credit facilities to the exporters.**
- **ECGC provides:**
  - A range of **insurance cover to Indian exporters** against the risk of non-realization of export proceeds due to commercial or political risks.
  - Different types of **credit insurance covers to banks and other financial institutions** to enable them to extend credit facilities to exporters

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- **Export Factoring facility for MSME sector** which is a package of financial products consisting of **working capital financing, credit risk protection, maintenance of sales ledger and collection of export receivables from the buyer** located in an overseas country.
- It also **administers the National Export Insurance Account (NEIA) Trust** which caters to project exports of strategic and national importance.

## PRACTICE QUESTIONS

## MCQS

**Q1. Which of the following best defines the term, 'fiscal deficit'?**

- The excess of government expenditure over its total revenue, excluding borrowing.
- The difference between government' total expenditure and its total receipts, excluding borrowing.
- The ratio of government borrowing to its GDP.
- The shortfall in revenue collection compared to the projected budget estimates.

**Q2. With reference to pulses production in India, consider the following statements:**

- The Kharif season accounts for a majority of the total pulses production.
- Black gram alone accounts for more than half of pulse production.
- Production of pulses in India has continuously increased since the last decade.

How many of the above statements is/are correct?

- Only one
- Only two
- Only three
- None

**Q3. With reference to Pension Fund Regulatory & Development Authority (PFRDA), consider the following statements:**

- It is a non-statutory regulatory body set up with an objective to promote old age income security by establishing, developing and regulating pension funds.
- It regulates the National Pension System (NPS), subscribed by Central government employees only.
- The contributions under Atal Pension Yojana are invested as per the investment guidelines prescribed by PFRDA.

How many of the above statements is/are correct?

- Only one
- Only two
- Only three
- None

**Q4. With reference to Exchange-traded fund (ETF), consider the following statements:**

- It is a type of fund that can be structured to track either individual or a diverse collection of securities.
- ETFs can be traded only once per day after the markets close.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- 1 only
- 2 only
- Both 1 and 2
- Neither 1 nor 2

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**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

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**Q5. Consider the following statements:**

1. The Central Government has debt of 57% of GDP as compared to that of 28% of GDP of the State Governments.
2. Public debt as a percent of GDP of India has steadily decreased in the last decade.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

## DESCRIPTIVE QUESTIONS

- Q1.** Do you agree that the Indian economy is experiencing K-shaped recovery? Give reasons in support of your answer
- Q2.** "Micro-Finance serves as an economic tool to promote financial inclusion, enabling impoverished households to escape poverty". Critically evaluate the role of Microfinance in Indian context.

**Answers:** 1-b, 2-d, 3-a, 4-a, 5-b

# CONSTITUTION, POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

# GS PAPER (PRELIMS) & GS PAPER II (MAIN)

## SC QUASHES RELEASE OF 11 CONVICTS IN BILKIS CASE

#POLITY AND GOVERNANCE #JUDICIARY

PRIMARY  
SOURCE THE HINDU

*Supreme court bench has quashed the order of Gujarat Government to grant remission of 11 convicts sentenced to life imprisonment for multiple murders and gang rapes, including that of Bilkis Bano, during the 2002 communal riots in Gujarat.*

The Supreme Court recently quashed the remission of 11 convicts whose life imprisonment sentence was given by a special court and upheld by the Bombay High Court. They were later released by the Gujarat government under its remission policy, sparking a debate about the criminal justice system of India. In this article, we will discuss the analysis of the above issues in the following article.

### FACTS AND TIMELINE OF THE CASE

- 2002: Bilkis Bano was raped, and her family members murdered in the Gujarat Riots of 2002.
- 2003: Supreme Court ordered an enquiry into the matter.
- 2008: a special court convicted 11 men and sentenced them to life imprisonment.
- 2017: Bombay HC upholds sentence
- May 2022: Supreme Court directs Gujarat government to consider the plea for premature release under the remission policy of State of Gujarat 1992.
- August 2022: As per governments remission policy, 11 convicts were released from Godhra sub jail.

- November 2022: Bilkis moves Supreme Court challenging the remission.
- December 2022: Court dismisses her plea stating that State of Gujarat was the appropriate government competent enough to examine the application of premature release.
- 2023: Court notice to Union and Gujarat Govt. on review filed by Bilkis Bano challenging the remission.
- 2024: Court quashes remission to 11 convicts.

### About Remission:

- Remission implies the executive's power to reduce the period of sentence without reducing its character. For example, a sentence of rigorous imprisonment of 3 years can be remitted to rigorous imprisonment of 2 years.
- Remission is rooted in the logic that, ultimately, prisons are meant to be rehabilitative spaces rather than simply being an instrument to carry out retributive punishment.

### ABOUT PRISON RULES

Prison is a State subject which allows the state government to frame prison rules. As a result, prison rules of each State identify certain reformatory and rehabilitative activities that the prisoners can undertake in order to earn remission in the form of days. The total number of days earned in remission is deducted from the actual sentence imposed by the court.

### CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS WITH RESPECT TO REMISSION

- **Article 72:** The President has the power to pardons, reprieves, respites, or remission of punishment or to suspend remit or commute the sentence of any person convicted of any offence.



## CONSTITUTION, POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

- **Article 161:** Power of the Governor to pardon, reprieve, respite a punishment or suspend, remit, or commute the sentence, which is given on the basis of the laws prevalent in the State, to which the executive power of the State extends.
- **Code of Criminal procedure:** Section 432 of Code of Criminal Procedure 1973 deals with the issue of remission. It reads-

### Section 432. Power to suspend or remit sentences.

— (1) When any person has been sentenced to punishment for an offence, the appropriate Government may, at any time, without conditions or upon any conditions which the person sentenced accepts, suspend the execution of his sentence, or remit the whole or any part of the punishment to which he has been sentenced.

Further, sub section (7) of Section 432 defines “appropriate Government” it reads:

(7) In this section and in section 433, the expression “appropriate Government” means, —

(a) in cases where the sentence is for an offence against, or the order referred to in sub-section (6) is passed under, any law relating to a matter to which the executive power of the Union extends, the Central Government.

(b) in other cases, the Government of the State within which the offender is sentenced, or the said order is passed.

### CONCEPTS RELATED TO PARDONING POWERS

- **Pardon:** It removes both the sentence and the conviction and completely absolves the convict from all sentences, punishments and disqualifications.
- **Commutation:** It denotes the substitution of one form of punishment for a lighter form. For example, a death sentence may be commuted to rigorous imprisonment, which in turn may be commuted to a simple imprisonment.
- **Remission:** It implies reducing the period of sentence without changing its character. For example, a sentence of rigorous imprisonment for two years may be remitted to rigorous imprisonment for one year.
- **Respite:** It denotes awarding a lesser sentence in place of one originally awarded due to some special fact, such as the physical disability of a convict or the pregnancy of a woman offender.

- **Reprieve:** It implies a stay of the execution of a sentence (especially that of death) for a temporary period. Its purpose is to enable the convict to have time to seek pardon or commutation from the President.

As evident from the above provision, the executive has been given significant discretion in granting remission, leading to potential transparency issues in decision-making process. To formalise the process of granting remission and ensure that justice is not carried out arbitrarily, the Supreme Court, in the **Laxman Naskar case**, specified that the committee should consider certain factors while upholding individual cases of remission. The decision should be based on the following factors:

- Whether the offence is an individual act of crime without affecting society at large?
- Whether there is any chance of future recurrence of committing a crime?
- Whether the convict has lost his potentiality in committing a crime?
- Whether there is any fruitful purpose in confining this convict anymore?
- Socio-economic condition of the convict's family.

### SUPREME COURT ON THE JUDICIAL REVIEW OF THE ORDER OF REMISSION

In *Epuru Sudhakar vs State of Andhra Pradesh* (2006) case, the Supreme Court dealt with issue of the judicial review of an order of remission and said that the review will be available only in the following cases:

- When there is a non-application of mind;
- Relevant materials have not been considered;
- The order is mala fide or based on irrelevant considerations or suffers from arbitrariness.

### SUPREME COURT OBSERVATIONS IN THE CONTEXT BILKIS BANO CASE

- **Violation of law:** The Supreme Court said the grant of remission to 11 men serving life sentence in the Bilkis Bano case was a “classic case” of using a Supreme Court order to violate the law.
- **Defrauded Supreme Court:** SC observed that it was defrauded into delivering its decision on May 13, 2022. The respondents had not divulged a series of facts which would have tilted the Supreme Court's decision against them.
- **Act of misrepresentation of facts:** May 2022 decision suffered from a misrepresentation made by a convict

## CONSTITUTION, POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

that there was a “divergence in opinion” between the Bombay and Gujarat High Courts. Gujarat High Court order of March 13, 2020, refused remission and reiterated its 2019 position to approach the Maharashtra government was never challenged or set aside.

- **State of Gujarat acted in tandem with complicit:** Court observed that the State of Gujarat acted in tandem and was complicit with what the respondent had sought before this court.
- **Application of mind while granting remission:** Court observed that there should be an application of mind on the remission application to eliminate discretionary en masse release of convicts on ‘festive’ occasions. Each release requires a case-by-case scrutiny.
- The grant of remission should be well-informed, reasonable, and fair to “all concerned”.
- **Outline factors before granting remission:** Court has given a brief outlining of the factors a state government should consider while entertaining the remission application of a convict.
- **Opinion of trial judge must be sought:** The opinion of the presiding trial judge should be mandatorily sought and only the State in which the convict was convicted would be competent under Section 432 to consider the remission plea.
- The policy of remission applicable at the time of the conviction could apply, and only if for any reason, the said policy cannot be made applicable, a more benevolent policy, if in operation, could apply.

### JUDGEMENT

- **State is bound by rule of law:** Rule of law means, no one, however high or low, is above the law; it is the basic rule of governance and democratic polity.
- **Rule of law must prevail:** If ultimately rule of law is to prevail and the disputed orders of remission are set-aside by us, then the natural consequences must follow. Therefore, the released persons are directed to report to the concerned jail authorities within two weeks from the date of judgement.

The rule of law and equality before the law would be empty words if their violation is not a matter of judicial scrutiny. But, a blanket denial of remission for crime categories, rather than ensuring effective compliance with remission conditions, takes us towards a punishment framework that is retributive. Therefore, a balanced

approach that promotes justice while upholding a reformative approach towards the citizen is the need of the hour.

## ROLE OF GOVERNOR OF STATES

#POLITY AND CONSTITUTION

PRIMARY  
SOURCE THE HINDU

*The role of Governor of Kerala has become a subject of debate in the recent times. The Kerala government introduced a bill to abolish the Vice Chancellorship of the Governor, the governor did not assent the bill and referred the bill to President.*

### CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS

- **Article 153:** It provides that there shall be an office of Governor for each State.
- **Article 155:** Governor shall be appointed by the President by warrant under his hand and seal.
- **Article 157:** Eligibility for appointment.

### ISSUES ARISING OUT OF THE FUNCTIONING OF OFFICE OF GOVERNOR

- Process of appointment and dismissal of Governor.
- Governor acting at the behest of Centre.
- Discretionary and partisan role of Governor.
- Returning of bill sent for reconsideration.
- Not acting upon the bill adopted by the assembly.
- Stalling the election of speaker of State legislative assembly.
- Reservation of bills for the assent of President.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- **First Administrative Reforms Commission 1969:** Appointment of persons having long experience in public life and administration along with nonpartisan attitude as Governors.
- **Rajamannar Committee 1969:** Provisions that the State ministry holds office during the pleasure of Governor should be omitted.
- **The Sarkaria Commission Report (1988):** It observed that “some Governors have failed to display the qualities of impartiality and sagacity expected of them” and “many Governors, looking forward to further office under the Union or active role in politics after their

## CONSTITUTION, POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

tenure came to regard themselves as agents of the Union”.

- The Commission's recommendation that the “(Governor) should be a detached figure and not too intimately connected with the local politics of the State” remains wishful thinking.
- Article 356(President's rule) should be used very sparingly and as last resort.
- Governor cannot dismiss the council as long as it commands a majority in the assembly.
- **Venkatachaliah Commission (2002):** President should appoint the Governor of a State only after the consultation of Chief minister of the State.
  - Ordinarily, Governors should be allowed to complete their five years term, if they are removed before the completion of term, the central government should do so with consultation of Chief Minister.
- **Punchhi Commission (2007):** To review the working of Centre-State relations since the Sarkaria Commission, the Union Govt appointed Sarkaria Commission.
  - The period of six months prescribed in Article 201 for State Legislature to act when the bill is returned by the President can be made applicable for President also to decide on assenting or withholding.
  - Central Government should adopt following strict guidelines:
    - He/She should be eminent in some walk of life.
    - He/She should be a person from outside the state.
    - He/She should be a detached figure and should not be involved in local politics of State.
    - Should not have been active politically in the recent past.
- **Fixed tenure:** Governor should be given a fixed tenure of five years; removal should not be at the will of Centre.
- **Similar process of impeachment:** Procedure laid down for impeachment of President can be made applicable for the Governor as well.
- **Article 163** does not give the Governor a general discretionary power to act against the advice of Council of Ministers. The exercise of discretion is limited, and it must be dictated by reason, activated by good faith, and tempered by caution.
- **Chancellor of Universities:** Convention of Governor acting as chancellors of universities and other statutory

positions should be done away with. His/her role should be confined to Constitutional Provisions only.

- **Shamsher Singh v. State of Punjab(1974):** Under the Cabinet system of Government embodied in our Constitution **the Governor is the constitutional or formal head of the State and he exercises all his powers and functions conferred on him by or under the Constitution on the aid and advice of his Council of Ministers** save in spheres where the Governor is required by or under the Constitution to exercise his functions in his discretion.
- **SR Bommai v. Union of India (1994):** Supreme Court held that **federalism** is a part of the *basic structure of the Constitution*.
  - The manner in which the role of the Governor as a **symbolic Head** of State is performed is vital to safeguard this basic feature.
  - The exercise of **unbridled discretion** in areas not entrusted to the discretion of the Governor risks walking rough shod over the working of a democratically elected government at the State.
- **Rameshwar Prasad v. Union of India (2006):** Court found out that the Governor abused power in recommending Presidential rule in Bihar.
  - Supreme Court held **that the motivated and whimsical conduct of the Governor is amenable to judicial review.**
  - The “right persons” should be chosen as Governors for maintaining “the sanctity of the post”.
- **Kaushal Kishor v. State of Uttar Pradesh (2023):** Questions relating to disparaging comments by public functionaries came up for consideration before the Supreme Court.
  - The Court said that the freedom of expression of public functionaries could not be curtailed other than by way of the “reasonable restrictions”, as permitted by Article 19(2) of the Constitution.
  - In the context of ministers, if the statement by the public functionary is not consistent with the views of the government, it is attributable to the minister personally and they can be proceeded against.
- **State of Punjab v. Principal Secretary to Governor of Punjab:** Governor cannot use its constitutional powers to stall the enactment of legislative bills.

## CONSTITUTION, POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

- "The Governor, as a guiding statesman, may recommend reconsideration of the entirety of the Bill or any part thereof and even indicate the desirability of introducing amendments. However, the ultimate decision on whether or not to accept the advice of the Governor as contained in the message belongs to the legislature alone."
- If the Governor decides to withhold assent under the substantive part of Article 200, the logical course of action is to pursue the course indicated in the first proviso of remitting the Bill to the state legislature for reconsideration. In other words, the power to withhold assent under the substantive part of Article 200 must be read together with the consequential course of action to be adopted by the Governor under the first proviso."

**CONCLUSION:** As per the recommendations of Punchhi commission, to be able to discharge the constitutional obligations fairly and impartially, the Governor *should not be burdened with positions and powers which are not envisaged by the Constitution.* It said that conferring statutory power on Governors by posting them as chancellors of the universities will have the potential to expose Raj Bhavan to "**controversies or public criticism**" which is against the envisaged role of Governor in parliamentary form of government.

## SC UPHOLDS SEBI PROBE IN ADANI-HINDENBURG CASE

#REGULATORY BODIES

PRIMARY  
SOURCE THE HINDU

*Writ petition was filed in SC because of concerns raised over the decline in investor wealth and volatility in share market due to fall in share prices of Adani group.*

**Background:** The situation was caused by a report published by Hindenburg research about the financial transactions of the group.

- The report alleged that the Adani group manipulated its share prices and failed to disclose transactions with related parties and other relevant information in

violation of the regulations framed by SEBI and provisions of securities' legislation.

- Subsequently, Hindenburg Research took a **short position** in the Adani group through US-traded bonds and non- Indian traded derivative instruments.

### Relief for regulator

**Key takeaways from the SC judgment in Adani-Hindenburg case:**

- SEBI directed to investigate if the short position taken by Hindenburg amounted to any infraction of law
- The threshold to transfer investigation from SEBI to another agency is not present
- Judiciary's review of regulatory framework/policies of SEBI is limited to check if there is any manifest arbitrariness or violation of fundamental rights
- Petitioners did not verify the OCCRP findings; it cannot be used as conclusive proof or credible evidence against a statutory regulator
- SEBI probe is comprehensive; it has completed 22 out of 24 investigations against Adani Group
- Allegations of conflict of interest against members of the Justice A.M. Sapre Committee are dismissed



### Outcome of judgement:

- SC has said that the Investigation conducted by the SEBI into the Adani Group "**inspires confidence**" and was prima facie comprehensive. The market regulator had already completed 22 out of the 24 investigations into the group.
- The court has further ordered the SEBI to expeditiously complete the pending investigations, within three months, and said the regulator could not leave the probe "open-ended and indeterminate in time".
- The judgment refused the allegation that SEBI's amendments in the Foreign Portfolio Investors Regulations and Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements (LODR) Regulations had been conducted as an exercise in "first opening a loophole and then plugging the loophole with deferred effect" and has now hindered the regulator's investigation.

### ABOUT SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE BOARD OF INDIA

- The Securities and Exchange Board of India was constituted as a **non-statutory body** on April 12, 1988 through a resolution of the Government of India.
- The Securities and Exchange Board of India was established as a **statutory body in the year 1992** and



## CONSTITUTION, POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

the provisions of the Securities and Exchange Board of India Act, 1992.

### Objectives of SEBI

- SEBI is entrusted with regulating the functioning of the Indian capital market. The objectives of SEBI as a regulatory body are to monitor and regulate India's securities market to safeguard investors' interests.
- It aims to inculcate a safe investment environment by implementing several rules and regulations and formulating investment-related guidelines.
- One of the main objectives is to avoid malpractices in the Indian stock market.

## BLOW TO NETANYAHU

#COMPARATIVE CONSTITUTIONS

PRIMARY  
SOURCE THE HINDU

*The Israeli Supreme Court has struck down a law passed by the Knesset last year that sought to limit the judiciary's powers. The law had scrapped the **reasonability doctrine**, a legal standard used by the country's judiciary to assess government decisions and ministerial appointments.*

**Reasonability doctrine:** The power to review the legality or 'reasonability' of laws is like the power of judicial review vested with Indian courts. There is no law defining judicial review powers. The grounds for judicial intervention in administrative affairs have been promulgated through court rulings.

- As per the doctrine, administrative bodies must act with reasonableness, and lack thereof may be grounds for invalidating their decisions.

### POINTS OF SIMILARITY BETWEEN INDIAN AND ISRAELI JUDICIARY

- **Independent Judiciary:** Both India and Israel have an independent judiciary that operates separately from the executive and legislative branches of government. The judiciary plays a crucial role in interpreting and upholding the constitution.
- **Supreme Court as the Highest Court:** In both countries, the Supreme Court is the highest judicial authority. It has the power of judicial review and can

interpret constitutional matters, ensuring consistency and uniformity in legal decisions.

- **Hierarchy of Courts:** Both countries have a hierarchical structure of courts, with lower courts handling less serious cases and higher courts dealing with more complex legal matters. This hierarchy allows for a systematic and organized approach to dispensing justice.
- **Adversarial System:** India and Israel follow the adversarial system of justice, where legal disputes are resolved through an adversarial presentation of evidence and arguments by opposing parties. This system is characterized by an impartial judge who oversees the proceedings.
- **Public Interest Litigation (PIL):** Both jurisdictions allow for Public Interest Litigation, which enables citizens to file cases in the public interest, even if they are not directly affected. This mechanism is aimed at ensuring justice for the wider community.
- **Common Law System:** India and Israel follow the common law legal system, which relies on precedent and judicial decisions to interpret and apply the law. This system provides stability and predictability in the legal framework.
- **Judicial Activism:** The judiciary in both countries has at times engaged in judicial activism, where the courts take an active role in addressing social and political issues. This involves the courts interpreting the constitution in a broader sense to protect individual rights and promote justice.
- **Appointment of Judges:** The process of appointing judges in both India and Israel involves a combination of executive and judicial inputs. Typically, a judicial appointments committee or a similar body is responsible for recommending candidates for judicial positions.
- **Protection of Fundamental Rights:** Both judicial systems are committed to protecting and upholding fundamental rights enshrined in their respective constitutions. The judiciary acts as a safeguard against any infringement on these rights by the government or any other entity.



## CONSTITUTION, POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

**Points of difference in the legal systems, constitutional provisions, and legal traditions of India and Israel:**

Criteria	Indian judiciary	Israeli judiciary
Legal Tradition	India follows a mixed legal system with influences from English common law, and personal laws.	Israel follows a mixed legal system that incorporates elements of English common law, civil law, and Jewish religious law.
Constitutional Basis	Based on a written constitution adopted in 1947	Israel does <b>not have a formal written constitution</b> . Instead, it relies on a collection of Basic Laws that serve as the constitutional framework.
Federal vs. Unitary Structure	India has a federal system of government with a clear division of powers between the central government and the states.	Israel has a more unitary system, with a strong central government and less distinct separation of powers.
Appointment of Judges:	The President appoints judges based on the recommendation of the collegium.	Judges are appointed by the <b>Judicial Appointments Committee</b> , which includes both legal and non-legal members.
Judicial review	India has a robust system of judicial review, and the Supreme Court has the authority to strike down laws that are unconstitutional.	In Israel, the power of judicial review is not as extensive.
Personal laws	Due acknowledgement of personal laws provided in India	Israel does not accord similar recognition to personal laws of minorities.
Role of precedent	Strong emphasis on role of precedent.	Israel's legal system is more flexible in the application of precedent.
Language of Court	English, regional language	Hebrew

### COURT SYSTEM IN ISRAEL

- **Special Courts (1 judge):** For the matters of traffic, labour, juvenile, military, and municipal courts, with clearly defined jurisdiction and administrative tribunals.
- **Religious Courts (1 or 3 judges):** Matters of personal status (marriage, divorce maintenance, guardianship, adoption)
- **Magistrate's Court (1 judge):** Civil and minor criminal offences; jurisdiction civil and criminal cases.
- **District Court (1 or 3 judges):** Appellate jurisdiction over magistrate's courts, original jurisdiction in more important civil and criminal cases.
- **Supreme Court (1,3, 5 or a larger uneven number of judges):** Ultimate appellate jurisdiction, nationwide; right to address issues when. Necessary to intervene for the sake of justice; authority to release persons illegally detained or imprisoned; to sit as highest court of

justice; hears petitions against any government body or agent as court of first and last instance.

## ELECTIONS IN RAJYA SABHA

#PARLIAMENT

PRIMARY SOURCE THE HINDU

*The Aam Aadmi Party has nominated Swati Maliwal to Rajya Sabha.*

### ABOUT RAJYA SABHA

- **Composition of Rajya Sabha**
  - The maximum strength of the Rajya Sabha is fixed at 250, out of which, 238 are to be the representatives of the states and union territories (elected indirectly) and 12 are nominated by the president.

## CONSTITUTION, POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

- At present, the Rajya Sabha has 245 members. Of these, 229 members represent the states, 4 members represent the union territories, and 12 members are nominated by the president.
- The Fourth Schedule of the Constitution deals with the allocation of seats in the Rajya Sabha to the states and union territories.

### REPRESENTATION IN RAJYA SABHA

#### • Representation of States in Rajya Sabha

- The representatives of states in the Rajya Sabha are elected by the elected members of state legislative assemblies. The election is held in accordance with the system of proportional representation by means of the single transferable vote.
- The seats are allotted to the states in the Rajya Sabha based on population. Hence, the number of representatives varies from state to state.
  - For example, Uttar Pradesh has 31 members while Tripura has 1 member only.
  - However, in USA, all states are given equal representation in the Senate irrespective of their population. USA has 50 States, and the Senate has 100 members–2 from each state.

#### • Representation of Union Territories

- The representatives of each union territory in the Rajya Sabha are indirectly elected by members of an electoral college specially constituted for the purpose.
- This election is also held in accordance with the system of proportional representation by means of the single transferable vote. Out of the nine union territories, only three (**Delhi, Puducherry, and Jammu & Kashmir**) have representation in Rajya Sabha.
- The populations of other six union territories are too small to have any representative in the Rajya Sabha.

#### • Nominated Members

- The president nominates 12 members to the Rajya Sabha from people who have special knowledge or practical experience in **art, literature, science, and social service**.
  - The rationale behind this principle of nomination is to provide eminent persons a place in the Rajya Sabha without going through the process of

election. It should be noted here that the American Senate has no nominated members.

### DURATION OF RAJYA SABHA

- The Rajya Sabha (first constituted in 1952) is a continuing chamber, i.e., it is a permanent body and not subject to dissolution. However, one-third of its members retire every second year. Their seats are filled up by fresh elections and presidential nominations at the beginning of every third year. The retiring members are eligible for re-election and renomination any number of times.
- The Constitution has not fixed the term of office of members of the Rajya Sabha and left it to the Parliament. Accordingly, the Parliament in the Representation of the People Act (1951) provided that the term of office of a member of the Rajya Sabha shall be six years. The act also empowered the president of India to curtail the term of members chosen in the first Rajya Sabha. In the first batch, it was decided by lottery as to who should retire. Further, the act also authorised the President to make provisions to govern the order of retirement of the members of the Rajya Sabha.

**ALLOCATION OF SEATS TO RAJYA SABHA:** Schedule IV of the Constitution of India deals with the number of seats allocated to Rajya Sabha from various states. For example:

States with highest number of seats	States with least number of seats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uttar Pradesh - 31</li> <li>• Maharashtra - 19</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nagaland - 1</li> <li>• Goa - 1</li> </ul>

### MECHANISM OF VOTING

- Candidates fielded by political parties must be proposed by at least 10 members of the Assembly or 10% of the party's strength in the House, whichever is less. For independents, there should be 10 proposers, all of whom should be members of the Assembly.
- In Rajya Sabha election, elected MLAs (Members of Legislative Assembly) participate and vote to select the Rajya Sabha members. The voting is done using a system called **proportional representation with the single transferable vote (STV)**.
- **Single transferable vote** means electors can vote for any number of candidates in order of their preference. It means MLAs do not vote for each seat individually. Instead, they list different candidates in order of preference, marking 1,2,3... against their names.

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- To be elected, a candidate needs to receive a specified number of **first preference votes**, which is the qualifying threshold.
- Each first-choice vote has a value of 100 in the first round. To qualify, a candidate needs one point more than the quotient obtained by dividing the total value of the number of seats for which elections are taking place plus one.
  - For instance, if there are four seats and 180 MLAs voting, the qualifying number will be  $180/5 = 36$  votes or a value of 3,600. Generally, the results are clear after one round itself. The extra candidate is eliminated for the lack of enough first preference votes.
- In case of second round, the remaining votes are then transferred to other candidates based on their lower preference rankings, but with a diminished value. The total value of the votes polled by the remaining candidates both as first and subsequent preferences would be used to decide the winner.
- This means that MLAs can also support candidates from parties other than their own in second round. However, giving second or subsequent preferences is optional.
- The winner must secure a minimum quota of votes, which is determined by the formula:

$$\text{Quota} = (\text{Total votes polled} / (\text{Total number of candidates to be elected} + 1)) + 1$$

### BALLOT MECHANISM

- The Rajya Sabha polls have a system of **open ballot**, but it is a **limited form of openness**. It was taken as a measure to check rampant cross-voting, which was taken to mean that the vote had been purchased by corrupt means.
  - Thus, the system of each party MLA showing his or her marked ballots to the **party's authorised agent**, before they are put into the ballot box, has been introduced.
- However, showing a marked ballot to anyone other than one's own party's authorised agent will render the vote invalid. Not showing the ballot to the authorised agent will also mean that the vote cannot be counted.
- Independent candidates are barred from showing their ballots to anyone.

### CROSS-VOTING AND DISQUALIFICATION

- Supreme Court in ***Shailesh Manubhai Parmar v Election Commission of India*** declining to interfere with the open ballot system and ruled that not voting for the party candidate will not attract disqualification under the anti-defection law.
- MLAs as voters retain their freedom to vote for a candidate of their choice. However, the Court observed that since the party would know who voted against its own candidate, it is free to take disciplinary action against the legislator concerned.

### Legislator's right to vote without taking oath as a member of the Assembly:

- While taking oath as a member is for anyone to function as a legislator, the Supreme Court has ruled that a member can vote in a Rajya Sabha election even before taking oath as legislator.
- SC ruled that voting at the Rajya Sabha polls is a non-legislative activity and can be performed without taking oath. A person becomes a member as soon as the list of elected members is notified by the ECI, it said. Further, a member can also propose a candidate before taking oath.

### STATUS OF RAJYA SABHA VIS A VIS LOK SABHA

**Equal Status with Lok Sabha:** In the following matters, the powers and status of the Rajya Sabha are equal to that of the Lok Sabha:

- Introduction and passage of ordinary bills.
- Introduction and passage of Constitutional amendment bills.
- Introduction and passage of financial bills involving expenditure from the Consolidated Fund of India.
- Election and impeachment of the president.
- Election and removal of the Vice-President. However, Rajya Sabha alone can initiate the removal of the vice-president. He is removed by a resolution passed by the Rajya Sabha by an effective majority (which is a type of special majority) and agreed to by the Lok Sabha by a simple majority.
- Making recommendation to the President for the removal of Chief Justice and judges of Supreme Court and high courts, chief election commissioner and comptroller and auditor general.
- Approval of ordinances issued by the President.
- Approval of proclamation of all three types of emergencies by the President.

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## CONSTITUTION, POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

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- Selection of ministers including the Prime Minister. Under the Constitution, the ministers including the Prime Minister can be members of either House. However, irrespective of their membership, they are responsible only to the Lok Sabha.
- Consideration of the reports of the constitutional bodies like Finance Commission, Union Public Service Commission, comptroller, and auditor general, etc.
- Enlargement of the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court and the Union Public Service Commission.

**Unequal Status with Lok Sabha:** In the following matters, the powers and status of the Rajya Sabha are unequal to that of the Lok Sabha:

- A Money Bill can be introduced only in the Lok Sabha and not in the Rajya Sabha.
  - However, Rajya Sabha cannot amend or reject a Money Bill. It should return the bill to the Lok Sabha within 14 days, either with recommendations or without recommendations.
  - The Lok Sabha can either accept or reject all or any of the recommendations of the Rajya Sabha. In both the cases, the money bill is deemed to have been passed by the two Houses.
- A financial bill, not containing solely the matters of Article 110, also can be introduced only in the Lok Sabha and not in the Rajya Sabha. But, regarding its passage, both the Houses have equal powers.
- The final power to decide whether a particular bill is a Money Bill or not is vested in the Speaker of the Lok Sabha.
- The Speaker of Lok Sabha presides over the joint sitting of both the Houses.
- The Lok Sabha with greater number wins the battle in a joint sitting except when the combined strength of the ruling party in both the Houses is less than that of the opposition parties.
- Rajya Sabha can only discuss the budget but cannot vote on the demands for grants (which is the exclusive privilege of the Lok Sabha).
- A resolution for the discontinuance of the national emergency can be passed only by the Lok Sabha and not by the Rajya Sabha.
- The Rajya Sabha cannot remove the council of ministers by passing a no-confidence motion. This is because the

Council of ministers is collectively responsible only to the Lok Sabha. But the Rajya Sabha can discuss and criticize the policies and activities of the government.

**Special Powers of Rajya Sabha:** The Rajya Sabha has been given four exclusive or special powers that are not enjoyed by the Lok Sabha:

- **Legislation on state list:** It can authorise the Parliament to make a law on a subject enumerated in the State List (Article 249).
- **All India Service:** It can authorise the Parliament to create new All-India Services common to both the Centre and states (Article 312).
- **Removal of Vice President:** It alone can initiate a move for the removal of the Vice President. In other words, a resolution for the removal of the vice-president can be introduced only in the Rajya Sabha and not in the Lok Sabha (Article 67).
- **National Emergency:** If a proclamation is issued by the President for imposing national emergency or president's rule or financial emergency at a time when the Lok Sabha has been dissolved or the dissolution of the Lok Sabha takes place within the period allowed for its approval, then the proclamation can remain effective even if it is approved by the Rajya Sabha alone (**Articles 352, 356 and 360**).

Analysis of the above points makes it clear that the position of the Rajya Sabha in our constitutional system is not as weak as that of the House of Lords in the British constitutional system nor as strong as that of the Senate in the American constitutional system. Except in financial matters and control over the council of ministers, the powers and status of the Rajya Sabha in all other spheres are **broadly equal and coordinate with that of the Lok Sabha**. Even though the Rajya Sabha has been given less powers as compared with the Lok Sabha, its utility is supported on the following grounds:

- **Checks hasty legislation:** It checks hasty, defective, careless, and ill-considered legislation made by the Lok Sabha by making provision of revision and thought.
- **Representation to eminent personalities:** It facilitates giving representation to eminent professionals and experts who cannot face the direct election. The President nominates 12 such persons to the Rajya Sabha.

## CONSTITUTION, POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

- **Maintains federal equilibrium:** It maintains the federal equilibrium by protecting the interests of the states against the undue interference of the Centre.

### PRADHAN MANTRI ANUSUCHIT JAATI ABHYUDAY YOJANA (PM- AJAY)

#SOCIAL JUSTICE #SCHEMES

PRIMARY  
SOURCE THE HINDU

Ministry of Social Justice and empowerment has merged 03 Centrally Sponsored Scheme namely: (a) Pradhan Mantri Adarsh Gram Yojana (PMAGY) (b) Special Central Assistance to Scheduled Castes Sub Plan (SCA to SCSP) & (c) Babu Jagjivan Ram Chhatrawas Yojana (BJRCY) into Pradhan Mantri Anusuchit Jaati Abhyuday Yojana.

#### AIM OF PM-AJAY SCHEME

PM-AJAY scheme has been implemented since 2021-22 with an aim to:

- Aim to reduce poverty among the SC communities.
- Emphasizes on generation of additional employment opportunities through Skill development,
- Income generating schemes to improve socio-economic developmental indicators
- Ensuring adequate infrastructure and services in the SC dominated villages.

#### COMPONENTS OF SCHEME

- Development of SC dominated villages into an "Adarsh Gram".
- 'Grants-in-aid' for District/State-level Projects for socio-economic betterment of SCs for:
  - Creation of infrastructure in SC dominated villages including those elected under Adarsh Gram component.
  - Construction of Hostels/Residential schools, Comprehensive Livelihood Projects including components like Skill development, related infrastructure development, financial assistance towards loans taken by beneficiaries for asset creation needed for livelihood generation etc.

- Construction of Hostels in higher educational institutions.

- Which are top-ranked as per the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) and are funded by the Centre/State/UT Governments either fully or partially.
- Construction of hostels in schools which are either fully or partially funded by the Centre/State/UT Governments and recommended by the Ministry of Education

#### DETAILS ABOUT THE COMPONENTS

2. **Development of SC dominated villages in to an "Adarsh Gram" (previously Pradhan Mantri Adarsh Gram Yojana):** Objective of Adarsh Gram Component is to ensure integrated development of SC majority villages so that there is:

- Adequate infrastructure
  - All requisite infrastructures necessary for socio-economic development needs are to be provided under the Scheme.
- Improvement in Socio-Economic Indicators.
  - The identified socio-economic indicators, called as **Monitorable indicators**, are to be improved so that the disparity between SC and non-SC population is eliminated and the level of indicators is raised to at least that of the National average. Specifically:
    - all BPL SC families should have food and livelihood security.
    - all SC children should complete education at least up to the secondary level.
    - all factors leading to maternal and infant mortality are addressed.
    - incidence of malnutrition, especially among children and women, is eliminated.

3. **'Grants-in-aid' for District/State-level Projects component (previously scheme of Special Central Assistance to Scheduled Caste Sub Plan):** It aims at socio-economic development of SCs through grants for following types of projects:

- **Comprehensive Livelihood Projects:** To create an eco-system for producing sustainable income, or social advancement to the Scheduled Castes only shall be taken up. The projects should preferably be a combination of two or more of following:



## CONSTITUTION, POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

- **Skill Development:** Skilling courses as per norms of MSDE. Related facilities and infrastructure for conducting Skill Development Activities conducted by the Government. Skill Development Institutions can also be funded.

4. **Grants for creation/acquisition of assets for beneficiaries/households:** Standalone individual asset distribution under the scheme. However, if project has provision for acquisition/creation of assets for beneficiaries/households needed for livelihood generation, financial assistance towards loans taken by the beneficiary for such acquisition/creation assets, would be up to Rs.50,000 or 50% of the asset cost, whichever is less, per beneficiary/household.

- **Infrastructure development:** Development of infrastructure related to the project and Hostels and residential schools. Other infrastructure- Various other infrastructure development projects in SC majority villages.

### Special Provisions:

- Upto 15% of the total Grants exclusively on viable income generating economic development schemes/programme for SC Women.
- Up to 30% of the total Grants utilized for infrastructure development, at least 10% of the total funds for skill development.
- Promote SC Women Cooperatives engaged in production and marketing of consumer goods and services.

### 3. Hostel Component {previously Babu Jagjivan Ram Chhatrawas Yojana}:

**Objectives:** Scheme for construction of hostels to enable and encourage Scheduled Caste students to attain quality education and reduce their dropout rate

#### CENTRAL ASSISTANCE FOR CONSTRUCTION

North-eastern Region	Rs. 3.50 lakh per inmate
Northern Himalayan Regions	Rs 3.25 lakh per inmate
Gangetic Plains & Lower Himalayan Region	Rs3.00 lakh per inmate

- Additionally, one time Grant of Rs. 5000/- per student for making provisions of cot, table etc.

- Repair and maintenance cost upto Rs.5.00 lakh for a hostel of 50 inmates constructed under the scheme, once in 5 years.

**Recent changes (Since 2021-22):** 100% Central assistance for hostels for boys' hostels, earlier it was on cost sharing basis with State Implementing agencies.

### Achievements during the current Financial Year 2023-24

- A total of 1834 villages have been Declared as Adarsh Gram during the current FY2023-24 under Adarsh Gram Component.
- 15 new hostels have been sanctioned under Hostel component of the scheme.
- Perspective plan for 17 States have been approved under Grant-in-aid component during the current financial year.

## BSF JURISDICTION EXTENDED: WHY PUNJAB HAS MOVED TO SC

#FEDERALISM #INTERNAL SECURITY

PRIMARY  
SOURCE THE HINDU

*The Ministry of Home Affairs in 2021 had increased the operational jurisdiction of the **Border Security Force** from the present 15 KM to 50 KM from the International Border in Punjab, Assam, and West Bengal. Punjab has challenged it in **Supreme Court under Article 131 (Original Jurisdiction of Supreme Court)**.*

### NEED FOR INCREASED JURISDICTION:

- There is an increased use of Unarmed Aerial Vehicles with long range capabilities for surveillance and smuggling of arms and currency.
- Cattle smuggling is a menace in West Bengal and smugglers seek refuge outside the BSF Jurisdiction.
- This has made the BSF jurisdiction uniform across all the states. (Earlier, there was varying jurisdiction, for example, in Gujarat BSF had the jurisdiction of 80 KM from the International Border.)

### ISSUES RAISED BY PUNJAB

- Punjab argues that it is a breach of **federal principles**.

## CONSTITUTION, POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

- Encroaches into **the law-and-order powers** of the Punjab police.
- Maintenance of public order is a state subject, the notification encroaches upon the matters involving public order.
- Large number of cities and towns in the densely populated state of Punjab would fall under the jurisdiction of BSF which could create further administrative and governance challenges.

### QUESTIONS OF LAW BEFORE THE SC

- Whether the notification is arbitrary or backed by reason.
- Whether the notification interferes with the powers of local police and encroaches upon the state's powers.
- SC will determine what factors should be considered when deciding which areas are "within the local limits of such areas adjoining the borders of India".
- Whether all states must be treated alike when determining these local limits.

### ABOUT BORDER SECURITY FORCE

- Border Security Force is an armed force of the Central Government constituted for ensuring security of India's borders.
- BSF was raised in 1965 after Pakistan's attack on India's borders in Kutch. Before this the responsibility of manning India's borders was with the respective State Armed Police Battalion.
- It was constituted under the Border Security Force Act, 1968.
- Responsibilities of BSF:
  - Guarding India's borders with Pakistan and Bangladesh as well as Line of Control.
  - BSF is also performing Anti-Infiltration role in Kashmir Valley, Counter Insurgency in North East region, Anti Naxal Operations in Odisha and Chhattisgarh states and security of Integrated Check Posts along Pakistan and Bangladesh International Border.
- The force is headquartered in New Delhi.
- The General Superintendence of the BSF lies with the Union Ministry of Home Affairs and is vested in the Director General appointed by the Central Government as the overall head of this force.

- **Note:** BSF does not have the powers to investigate or prosecute offenders, but has to hand over those arrested and contraband seized to the local police. BSF personnel usually work in close coordination with the police and there ought to be no clash of jurisdiction.

### FUNCTIONS OF BSF DURING PEACE TIME

- Promote a sense of security among the people living in the border areas.
- Prevent trans-border crimes, unauthorized entry into or exit from the territory of India.
- Prevent smuggling and any other illegal activity.
- BSF has power to arrest, search and seizure under the CrPC, Passport Act, NDPS Act, Arms Act, Customs Act.

## LEGAL SERVICE COULD BE AS SIMPLE AS ACCESS TO TECH-BASED PAYMENTS

#POLITY AND CONSTITUTION

PRIMARY  
SOURCE THE HINDU

*In the recently concluded Palkhivala memorial lecture, UIDAI Chairman Nandan Nilekani emphasized on the use of technology for reducing judicial pendency, Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) and expanding legal aid and service.*

### ABOUT NATIONAL LEGAL SERVICE AUTHORITY (NALSA)

#### Formation:

- National Legal Service Authority (NALSA) derives its power through The Legal Services Authority Act, 1987.
- The Act promotes an inclusive legal system to ensure fair and meaningful justice to the marginalized and disadvantaged sector by strengthening the system of Lok Adalat and other Alternate Dispute Resolution mechanisms.
- The Act constitutes legal services authorities at National and respective State level to provide free and competent legal services to the weaker sections of society.

#### COMPOSITION: National Legal Services Authority shall consist of

- **Chief Justice of India** who shall be the Patron-in Chief,
- **A Serving or Retired** Judge of the Supreme Court to be nominated by the President, in consultation with the

## CONSTITUTION, POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

Chief Justice of India, who shall be the Executive Chairman and

- Such number of other members, possessing such experience and qualifications to be nominated in consultation with the Chief Justice of India.
- The Central Government shall, in consultation with the Chief Justice of India, appoint a person to be the Member-Secretary of the Central Authority to exercise such powers and perform such duties under the Executive Chairman of the Central Authority.

**FUNCTIONS:** NALSA shall perform the following for the weaker sections of society.

- Frame effective and economical schemes for the purpose of making legal services available to them.
- Take necessary steps by way of social justice litigation with respect to consumer protection, environmental protection, or other matter of special concern.
- It lays down policies, principles, guidelines, and frames effective and economical schemes for the State Legal Services Authorities to implement the Legal Services Programmes throughout the country.
  - Primarily, the State Legal Services Authorities, District Legal Services Authorities, Taluk Legal Services Committees, etc. have been asked to discharge the following main functions on regular basis:
    - To Provide Free and Competent Legal Services to the eligible persons.
    - To organize Lok Adalats for amicable settlement of disputes and.
    - To organize legal awareness camps in the rural areas.
- **Providing free legal aid:** Provides aid to the weaker sections of the society.

• **Providing free legal services:** The Free Legal Services include: -

- Payment of court fee, process fees and all other charges payable or incurred in connection with any legal proceedings.
- Providing service of lawyers in legal proceedings.
- Obtaining and supply of certified copies of orders and other documents in legal proceedings.
- Preparation of appeal, paper book including printing and translation of documents in legal proceedings.

• **Persons eligible for getting free legal services includes: -**

- Women and children.
- Members of SC/ST
- Industrial workmen
- Victims of mass disaster, violence, flood, drought, earthquake, industrial disaster.
- Disabled persons. vi) Persons in custody
- Persons whose annual income does not exceed Rs. 1 lakh (in the Supreme Court Legal Services Committee the limit is Rs. 5,00,000/-).
- Victims of Trafficking in Human beings or beggar.

- Train the social workers in legal skills for promotion of justice.
- Undertake and promote research in the field of legal services with special reference to the need for such services among the poor.
- Take steps to ensure commitment to the fundamental duties of citizens enshrined under Part IVA of the Indian Constitution.
- Monitor and evaluate implementation of the legal aid programs and schemes at periodic intervals.
- Provide grants-in-aid for specific schemes to various voluntary social service institutions & State and District Authorities.
- Develop, in consultation with the Bar Council of India, programs for clinical legal education and supervise the establishment and working of legal services clinics in universities, law colleges and other institutions.
- Make special efforts to enlist the support of voluntary social welfare institutions working at the grass-root level, particularly among the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, women, and rural and urban labour.
- Co-ordinate and monitor the functioning of State Authorities, District Authorities, Supreme Court Legal Services Committee, High Court Legal Services Committees, Taluk Legal Services Committees, voluntary social service institutions and other legal services organizations.

### MCQ BASED ON THE ISSUE

**Statement 1 is incorrect:** NALSA is not a constitutional body; it is a statutory body formulated under NALSA Act 1987.

## CONSTITUTION, POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

**Statement 2 is incorrect:** The Chief Justice of India serves as the Patron-in- Chief of NALSA.

**Statement 2 is correct:** Victims of natural disaster as well as man-made disaster are eligible for free legal aid.

## INDIA RANKS 93<sup>RD</sup> IN CORRUPTION PERCEPTION INDEX

#CORRUPTION

PRIMARY  
SOURCE THE HINDU

In the recently released Corruption Perception Index report by Transparency International, India has slipped in the rank to 93 in 2023 against 85<sup>th</sup> rank in 2022. According to the World Bank, **Corruption is the abuse of public office for private gain, it covers a wide range of behaviour, from bribery to theft of public funds.**

**ABOUT TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL:** It is a global civil society organization focused on combating corruption worldwide.

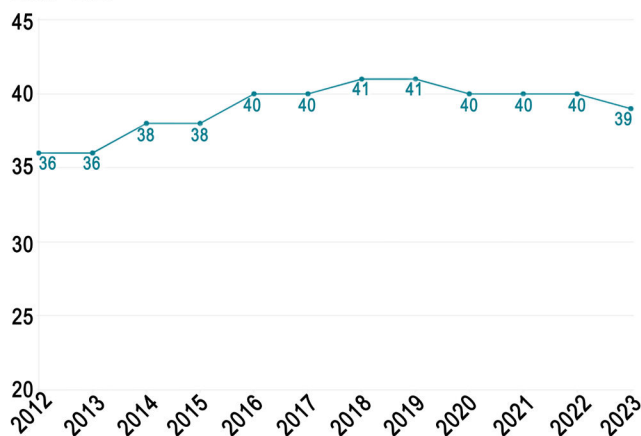
- **Founding:** Founded in 1993 by former World Bank official Peter Eigen in Berlin, Germany, and has since grown into a global network.
- **Mission:** To stop corruption by promoting transparency, accountability, and integrity at all levels and across all sectors of society.
- **Corruption Perception Index (CPI):** Known for its annual Corruption Perception Index (CPI), which ranks countries by perceived levels of public sector corruption. The CPI is based on expert assessments and opinion surveys carried out across countries.
- **Activities:** It carries out research, and awareness campaigns to combat corruption. It also works with governments, businesses, and civil society to promote transparency and accountability measures.
  - **Global Activism:** It advocates for the implementation of anti-corruption laws and policies globally. It also works to strengthen international frameworks and conventions aimed at combating corruption like United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC).
  - **Integrity Awards:** Presents Integrity Awards to individuals and organizations that have demonstrated exceptional courage and commitment in fighting corruption.

- **Secretariat:** It is headquartered in **Berlin, Germany**. The Transparency International Secretariat coordinates the activities of its global network and provides support to its national chapters.
- **Funding:** Organisation is funded by government grants, private donations, and institutional support, to ensure impartiality in its work, it maintains independence from any government or political ideology.
- **Impact:** Transparency International's efforts have contributed to
  - Increased awareness of corruption issues worldwide
  - Concrete changes in laws, policies, and practices aimed at combating corruption and promoting transparency and accountability.

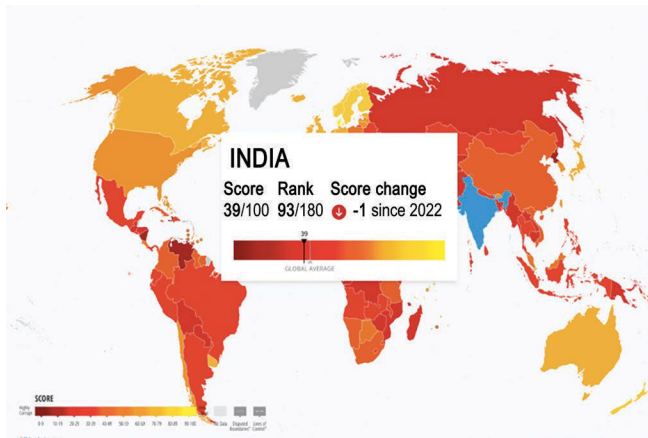
### KEY OBSERVATIONS BY CORRUPTION PERCEPTION INDEX

- **India's ranking has stagnated:** Corruption perception score has stagnated because of inadequate delivery of anti-corruption commitments.
- **Narrowing of civic space:** India has seen further narrowing of civic space, including through the passage of telecommunication bill that could be a 'grave threat' to fundamental rights".
- **Lack of delivery on anti-corruption agenda:** Weak scores reflect the lack of delivery by elected officials on anti-corruption agendas, together with crackdowns on organised civil society.
- **Freedom of press:** Attacks on freedom of press, assembly and association is also reason for decreased oversight and consequent rise of corruption.

India's Corruption Perception Index score  
2012 - 2023



## CONSTITUTION, POLITY AND GOVERNANCE



**Recommendations by the report:** To tackle corruption, promote justice and strengthen rule of law, Government should.

- **Strengthen independence of judicial system:** Promote merit-based appointment and protect judicial institutions from political interference.
- **Making justice delivery more transparent:** ensure that the data with respect to enforcement and administrative rules are openly available for better scrutiny by the public.
- **Ensuring integrity of administrators and prosecutors:** abuse can be prevented by dedicated whistleblowing and reporting mechanism.

### OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS WITH RESPECT TO REDUCING CORRUPTIONS

- **Strengthening Anti-Corruption Laws:** Enforce robust anti-corruption laws that cover both public and private sectors. These laws should include provisions for transparency, accountability, and severe penalties for corruption-related offenses.
- **Enhancing Transparency in Government:** Ensure greater transparency in government processes, decision-making, and expenditures through open data initiatives, public access to information laws, and mandatory disclosure of assets by public officials.
- **Promoting Accountability:** Establishing independent oversight bodies, such as anti-corruption commissions /Lokpal offices, with the power to investigate and prosecute corruption cases. Currently, such institutions lack enthusiasm to act on the complaints against corruption. (Around 68% corruption complaints against public functionaries that landed with the Lokpal of India were "disposed of" without any action in the past four years.)

- **Encouraging Citizen Participation:** Empowering citizens to actively participate in governance processes can help reduce corruption through promoting civic education, facilitating public consultations on policy decisions, and enabling **citizen monitoring of public services**.
- **Promoting Whistle-blower Protection:** Ensure comprehensive whistle-blower protection to safeguard individuals who report corruption from retaliation and ensure their anonymity and safety.
- **Culture of Integrity:** Promote ethical standards and values within society can help prevent corruption at all levels by promoting integrity in education, business, and civil society, as well as raising awareness about the negative consequences of corruption for the nation.

## CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

#NGOS, DEVELOPMENT INDUSTRY

PRIMARY  
SOURCE THE HINDU

*The South Asia Institute explored a range of instruments deployed by the state to restrict the civic space of 15 organisations, encompassing both small and large entities relying on foreign and domestic funding. The professor categorised these organisations into three groups based on the type and severity of the attacks they faced.*

### CIVIL SOCIETY

"The term **civil society** refers to a wide array of **non-governmental and not-for-profit organisations** that have a presence in public life, expressing the interests and values of their members or others, based on ethical, cultural, political, scientific, religious, or philanthropic considerations."

### CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS (CSOs)

- These are Non-State, not-for-profit, voluntary entities formed by people in the social sphere that are **separate from the State and the market**.
- Civil society organisations (CSOs) therefore refer to a **wide array of organisations:** community groups, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), labour unions, indigenous groups, charitable organisations, faith-based organisations, professional associations, and foundations.



## CONSTITUTION, POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

### TYPES OF CIVIL SOCIETIES IN INDIA

As given in 2nd ARC:

- Registered Societies formed for specific purposes
- Charitable organisations and Trusts
- Local Stakeholders Groups, Microcredit and SHGs
- Professional Self-Regulatory Bodies
- Cooperatives

### CHARACTERISTICS OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN INDIA

- **Diversity:** Civil society in India is highly diverse, encompassing a wide range of organisations, from large, well-established NGOs to small, grassroots groups.
- **Pluralism:** Indian civil society is characterised by pluralism, with organisations representing various interests, ideologies, and backgrounds.
- **Collaboration:** CSOs in India often collaborate and form networks to address common issues and achieve collective goals.
- **Autonomy:** While CSOs receive support from the government and other sources, they generally maintain their autonomy and independence in decision-making and operations.

Civil society organisations (CSOs) play a fundamental role in the development of India, complementing the efforts of the government and the private sector

### ROLE PLAYED BY CSOs

- **Upholding civil liberties:** Association for Protection of Democratic Rights helps provide legal aid to those who have no access to courts of law. Usually, such types of CSOs enable legal services and protect the citizens against repressive attitudes.
- **Accountability of government:** They monitor the activities of the government and its agencies to ensure that they are acting in accordance with the law and the interests of the citizens. They conduct research, collect data, and analyse policies and programs to identify gaps, loopholes, and areas where the government needs to improve. **E.g., ADR report on criminalization of politics.**
- **Mobilisation of citizens:** They promote public participation by raising awareness on important national, Regional or Local Issues – helps to strengthen participatory democracy in India.
- **Policy formulation:** They can advocate for policy reform and make recommendations to improve

policies and their implementation. By engaging with the government and other stakeholders, CSOs can influence policy decisions, advocate for policy changes, and push for implementation that is more equitable, efficient, and effective. **E.g., PUCL pushed for PDS reforms.**

- **Implementation of Policies & Programmes:** They partner with the government and other stakeholders to facilitate policy implementation. By working together, CSOs can share expertise, resources, and knowledge to ensure that policies are implemented efficiently and effectively. **E.g., MDM by Akshaya Patra Foundation.**
- **Feedback to Government:** They provide feedback and oversight to the government by monitoring the delivery of public services, collecting feedback from citizens, and reporting on the performance of government agencies. They also engage in social audits and citizen scorecards to assess the quality and impact of government programs and services. **E.g., ASER Survey by Pratham.**
- **Helps in Capacity Building** and filling development deficit in diverse sectors – health, education, environment awareness, social inclusion, skill enhancement etc.
- **Partners in social development:** CSOs play a crucial role in advocating for policy reforms that impact the rights and services of vulnerable groups in society. E.g., Organisations like **Pratham and ASHA** focus on providing education to children in rural areas and slums.
- Provides **platform for vulnerable sections** to raise their voice – e.g., concerns of sex workers, LGBT, HIV victims, victims of custodial torture etc.

### CHALLENGES FACED BY CSOs

- **Dependency Syndrome:** Most of the CSOs don't have adequate funds to carry out their work, as the people they serve lack the capacity to pay. Hence, they depend on receiving funds from the government/non-government bodies/international institutions. Now, with stringent provision of FCRA Amendment Act 2020, the problem of financial inadequacy of CSO's is only increasing.
- **Inadequate staff:** There exists a huge shortage of professional and trained personnel in the voluntary sector. Most of the personnel are unqualified and unskilled.
- **Accountability issues:** It is one of the issues plaguing CSOs in their operations and working. There have been

## CONSTITUTION, POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

increasing incidences of misuse of funds by these organisations.

- In January 2017, the Hon. Supreme Court of India called for an audit of nearly 30 lakh NGOs. This move was taken in the background of the NGOs failing to give an account of expenditure made out of the monies they had received.
- **Government – Civil Society interface:** The partnership of CSOs with the government has helped in successful implementation of many welfare and developmental programmes. CSOs have also successfully engaged with the government in formulating various national level policies. But this interface between the CSOs and government seems to be clouded with an overbearing attitude of governmental officials, bureaucratization, and inertia that has led to a gap in the interface between the two.
- **Parochial interest:** CSOs may sometimes be influenced by the interests of their donors or supporters, which can result in them prioritising the concerns of these groups over the broader public interest. In such cases, civil society may become a vehicle for advancing the interests of powerful groups or individuals rather than promoting the common good.

### CASE STUDY

- The Right to Information Act 2005 (RTI) represents a landmark legislation, which emerged from the domain of civil society, demanding transparency and accountability. Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan played a vital role in the formation of RTI act.
- The Lokpal bill is an anti-corruption legislation. The issue of Lokpal came to the centre stage in 2011, when Anna Hazare, a civil society activist, sat on an indefinite hunger strike in Delhi, demanding that the civil society draft or the Jan Lokpal bill be passed. The legislation finally passed as Lokpal and Lokayukta Act 2013.

### WAY FORWARD

- **Accountability mechanism:** There should be regular social and performance audits of Civil society organisations working in the country.
- **Trained staff:** Building capacity through training, networking, and mentorship can help these organisations become more effective and sustainable over the long term.

- **Financial Resources:** CSOs should explore a range of funding sources, such as grants, donations, crowdfunding, and social impact investing, to diversify their revenue streams. Building strong partnerships with other organisations, businesses, or government agencies can help CSOs secure funding and other resources.
- **Foster civic engagement:** CSOs can work to increase civic engagement and participation among India's diverse communities. This could involve empowering marginalised groups, providing education and awareness programs, and promoting greater citizen involvement in decision-making processes.

### TO BE DONE TO MAKE CIVIL SOCIETIES MORE EFFECTIVE

- **Symbiotic Relationship:** Government should acknowledge that a strong civil society thrives within a democratic framework guaranteed by the government, and CSOs must recognize the role of elected representatives in law-making, reducing the conflict.
- **Build Alliances:** A non-confrontational approach should be adopted by both the government and CSOs, especially in sensitive areas, focusing on issue-based collaboration.
- **Engage the Public:** Advocates for increased outreach by CSOs to a wider audience, particularly targeting the middle class and youth. Recognizes the link between economic and political capture and a specific development narrative.
- **Campaign for Transparency:** The government should promote more transparency and the need for easy access to information. At the same time, CSOs should also promote the principles of transparency and accountability in their management.
- **Create Counterculture:** Both government and CSOs should emphasise the need to create a counter-culture that promotes the ideas of democracy and equality. They should call for a popular narrative with a clear vision of change regarding poverty, gender, and social inclusion.
- **Improve Reputation:** Address the suspicion towards CSOs, particularly from the upper echelons of society. Encourages CSOs to work harder to convince people of their motivations, addressing concerns and improving their reputation.

## ISSUES RELATED TO HIT AND RUN CLAUSE IN BHARATIYA NYAYA SAMHITA, 2023

#CRIMINAL JUSTICE

PRIMARY  
SOURCE THE HINDU

*The implementation of Section 106 (2) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 (BNS), has sparked a wave of protests among truck drivers across multiple states.*

*The situation surrounding the protests against Section 106 (2) of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 (BNS), is complex. The government has introduced the provision to address the increasing road fatalities and instil a sense of moral responsibility among the citizens. However, the demands of the protesters raise valid concerns about the impact of the legislation on drivers, particularly in the context of their challenging work conditions.*

### KEY ASPECTS ABOUT THE ISSUE

#### Need of Such a Law

- **High Fatality Rate:** India recorded over 1.68 lakh road crash fatalities in 2022, leading to a daily average of 462 deaths. This indicates the magnitude of the problem and the immediate need for effective interventions.
- **Year-on-Year Increase:** Despite a global decrease in road crash deaths, India experienced a substantial year-on-year increase of 12% in road accidents and 9.4% in fatalities.
- **Frequency of Accidents:** The statistic of 19 deaths every hour, translating to one death every three and a half minutes, emphasises the continuous and pervasive nature of the road safety crisis in the country.
- **Highway Concerns:** Over half of all road fatalities occurring on national and state highways, which constitute less than 5% of the total road network, indicates a critical need for targeted safety measures on these specific road types.
- **High number of Hit and Run cases:** The National Crime Records Bureau recorded 47,806 hit and run incidents which resulted in the deaths of 50,815 people in 2022.
- **Global Comparison:** Despite having only 1% of the world's vehicles, India accounts for approximately 10%

of crash-related deaths. This highlights the disproportionate impact and challenges faced by the country in managing road safety.

- **Economic Impact:** The economic loss of 5-7% of GDP annually due to road crashes further emphasises the multifaceted impact of road accidents, extending beyond human lives to economic consequences.

To address such challenges, the government introduced new provisions under Bhartiya Nyaya Samhita to deter drivers from engaging in rash and negligent driving that can lead to fatalities. These provisions also impose a positive obligation on offenders to report such incidents, emphasising moral responsibility toward the victims.

### CONTESTED PROVISIONS OF BHARTIYA NYAYA SAMHITA

#### Section 106: Causing death by negligence

(1) Whoever **causes death of any person** by doing any rash or negligent act not amounting to culpable homicide, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to five years, and shall also be liable to fine.

(2) Whoever causes death of any person by rash and negligent driving of vehicle not amounting to culpable homicide, and escapes **without reporting it** to a police officer or a Magistrate soon after the incident, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description of a term which may extend to ten years, and shall also be liable to fine.

But the above provision led many drivers from different states to take to the road, expressing certain concerns.

### CONCERNS OF PROTESTERS ABOUT THE BROUGHT PROVISIONS

- **Severity of Punishment:** Transporters argue that the 10-year imprisonment and ₹7 lakh fine for fleeing the scene of an accident without reporting it is excessive.
- **Work Condition:** They contend that this penalty fails to consider the challenging work conditions, long driving hours, and difficult roads that drivers often face.
- **Unintentional Accidents:** Accidents may occur due to factors beyond the driver's control, such as poor visibility due to fog and the law remains silent on such unintentional accidents.
- **Fear of Mob Violence:** The fear of mob violence against drivers who stop to assist the injured at accident sites is mentioned, indicating potential safety risks for drivers.

## CONSTITUTION, POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

- **Negative Impact on the Transport Industry:** Drivers are worried that the stringent penalties may discourage individuals from joining or continuing in the transport profession, leading to a potential negative impact on the transport industry.

### ISSUES NEED TO BE ADDRESSED

- **Misinformation:** There is a need to address misinformation about the legislation, such as the incorrect claim that the fine for fleeing the accident spot is ₹7 lakh which is not mentioned under the provisions.
- **Revisiting and Reconciling Clauses:** The suggestion to revisit and reconcile the clauses, particularly distinguishing between rash and negligent driving, is a valid consideration.
- **Differentiating the degrees of liability and punishment** based on the nature of the incident could address the concerns raised by the protesters. Applying a single clause universally may unfairly prejudice drivers facing diverse circumstances.
- **Community Service and Licence Revocation:** In cases resulting in minor injuries, alternative measures such as community service, licence revocation, or mandatory driving retests could provide a more nuanced approach, helping avoid criminalising every incident and considering the circumstances of each case.

### BALANCING ROAD SAFETY AND DRIVERS' CONCERNS: A WAY AHEAD

- Revisiting and refining the legislation based on a holistic understanding of the issues raised by protesters could lead to a more just and effective legal framework.
- All the stakeholders should engage in a constructive dialogue to address the concerns of transporters while ensuring public safety on the roads.

## DISPUTE OVER ELECTION SYMBOLS

#ELECTION #PRELIMS NUGGETS

PRIMARY  
SOURCE THE HINDU

*Madras High Court declined to declare null and void the election of some MPs and MLAs who contested in general election and Assembly election, respectively, despite using reserved symbols from other political parties.*

### PROVISIONS RELATED TO ELECTION SYMBOLS

In the exercise of the powers conferred by Article 324 of the Constitution and Section 29A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, the Election Commission of India issued the ***Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) Order, 1968***, which provides for the following:

### CLASSIFICATION OF SYMBOLS

- A **reserved symbol** is designated exclusively for a recognized political party to allot to contesting candidates set up by that party.
- A **free symbol** is any symbol other than a reserved symbol.

### Allotment of Symbols:

- The order stipulates that symbols should be allotted to contesting candidates according to its provisions.
- Different symbols shall be allotted to different contesting candidates in the same constituency during an election.

### CHOICE OF SYMBOLS BY CANDIDATES OF NATIONAL AND STATE PARTIES AND ALLOTMENT THEREOF

- A candidate from a National Party or State Party in any constituency in India shall be allotted the symbol reserved for that party.
- A reserved symbol can only be chosen or allotted to a candidate from a National or State Party in the respective State, even if no candidate is fielded by that party in the constituency.

### ARGUMENT TO DECLINE THE WRIT PETITION

In the specific case before the Madras High Court, the court declined the writ petition filed by a petitioner. It held that the court lacks the authority to address the issue under a writ petition because the Constitution, under Article 329(b), stipulates that no election to Parliament or a State legislature could be called into question ***except through an election petition*** presented to such authority and in such manner as may be provided for under any law.

## CHIEF SECRETARY AND ISSUE WITH EXTENSION OF ITS TENURE IN DELHI

#STATE LEGISLATURE #UT

PRIMARY  
SOURCE THE HINDU

*The Supreme Court of India, through an order, permitted the Union Government to unilaterally extend the tenure of the*

## CONSTITUTION, POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

*incumbent Chief Secretary despite the opposition from the Delhi government on allegations of conflict of interest.*

### **TIMELINE OF CURRENT ISSUE WITH RESPECT TO SERVICE OF CHIEF SECRETARY IN DELHI**

#### **Government of NCT of Delhi vs Union of India Case, 2017 (Service Judgement):**

- In this case, the Supreme Court unequivocally held that references to "state government" in the relevant All India Rules (AIR) or Joint Cadre Rules (JCR) related to Delhi would mean the Government of Delhi.
- Following this ruling, the Delhi government's recommendation became necessary for extending the Chief Secretary's tenure under Rule 16 of the All India Services (Death-cum-Retirement Benefits) Rules, 1958.

#### **Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Act, 2021:**

- This act amended Section 21 of the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi Act, 1991, by inserting subsection (3), specifying that the expression "Government" referred to in any law to be made by the Legislative Assembly shall mean the Lieutenant Governor.

#### **Current Supreme Court Order:**

- The Supreme Court carved an exception for the Chief Secretary of Delhi, asserting that he is differently placed than other officers under the AIR or JCR and is not bound by the Services judgement.
- Despite the earlier ruling emphasising the Delhi government's role in extending the Chief Secretary's tenure, the Supreme Court's current order permits the Union Government to unilaterally extend the incumbent Delhi Chief Secretary's tenure.
- This decision comes despite the opposition of the Delhi Government, citing serious allegations of conflict of interest against the Chief Secretary, which are currently under investigation.

### **CHIEF SECRETARY OF A STATE**

While the Constitution of India does not have an explicit provision related to the chief secretary of states under Article 166, it provides for the conduct of the business of the state government. Their appointment is an executive action done by the chief minister in the name of governor.

- Depending on the state, the powers and functions of chief secretaries are defined in the rules of business.

- The Chief Secretary is at the apex of the administrative hierarchy of a state.
- Many of their functions have evolved through parliamentary custom and convention, and the rules are amended from time to time to accommodate new evolving roles.

### **ROLE OF CHIEF SECRETARY**

The Chief Secretary of a state acts as the ex-officio Secretary to the Council of Ministers and, in that capacity, he is known as the Secretary to the Cabinet and plays an important role in policy formulation.

1. **Head of the Cabinet Secretariat Department:** The Chief Secretary oversees the Cabinet Secretariat Department, functioning under the Chief Minister's political leadership.
2. **Work Pertaining to Cabinet Meetings:**
  - The Chief Secretary is responsible for preparing agenda papers for cabinet meetings.
  - As the ex-officio Secretary to the Council, they attend cabinet meetings and sub-committee meetings.
  - The Chief Secretary records decisions made in cabinet meetings and forwards copies to the Governor, Chief Minister, and council of ministers.
3. **Participation in the Policy Formulation Process:**
  - The Chief Secretary serves as the primary source of information and advice to the Chief Minister and other ministers.
  - Their presence in cabinet meetings is crucial to counterbalance ministers who may be influenced by public opinion or constituency pressure, ensuring decisions are made with long-term considerations.
4. **Role in the Follow-up of Cabinet Decisions:**
  - After cabinet decisions, the Chief Secretary oversees the implementation by the secretary of the concerned department.
  - The Chief Secretary has the authority to request documents related to any department's case.
5. **Representation at the National Level Consultations:**
  - The Chief Secretary represents the state in national-level consultations, contributing to discussions and decisions on broader issues.



## CONSTITUTION, POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

### FUNCTION AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF CHIEF SECRETARY

1. He chairs an expert body, which decides matters of awarding honours and distinctions.
2. He deals with matters relating to inter-state disputes.
3. The Chief Secretary can initiate changes in Rules of Business but the final decision in this respect rests with the cabinet.
4. All matters of housing accommodation and government buildings and circuit houses fall under his jurisdiction.

The functioning and responsibilities of the Chief Secretary affect all the departments and, therefore, the role of the Chief Secretary as the head of the General Administration Department remains of substantial significance.

## REGULATION ON DECEPTIVE OR UNSUBSTANTIATED ENVIRONMENT-RELATED CLAIMS BY ASCI

#ECONOMY #ENVIRONMENT #ENVIRONMENTAL  
ISSUES

PRIMARY  
SOURCE BusinessLine

*The Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI) has finalised guidelines to prevent deceptive or unsubstantiated environment-related claims by brands in advertising. Thus, checking claims of greenwashing.*

### NEED FOR SUCH REGULATION

The need for regulations, such as those now ASCI has brought, arises due to practices like greenwashing.

**Greenwashing** involves making false or misleading environmental claims about products, services, processes, brands, or operations with the intent to create an impression that they are more environmentally friendly than they truly are. This can include unsubstantiated claims like "environment-friendly" or "free from," among others.

- Greenwashing is a significant concern as it deceives consumers and goes against the principles outlined in

Chapter I of the ASCI code on misleading advertisements.

- To address and prevent such deceptive practices, ASCI has introduced guidelines.
- These guidelines serve as a framework to ensure that companies adhere to ethical advertising practices and do not breach the principles outlined in Chapter I of the ASCI code.

### ABOUT REGULATIONS

- **Absolute Claims:** Claims such as "environment-friendly", "sustainable" etc. must be substantiated by robust data or credible accreditations. Disclaimers or clarifications cannot dilute such claims.
- **Comparative Claims:** Claims like "greener" or "friendlier" should be supported by evidence showing environmental benefits over previous products or competitor products, and the basis of comparison must be clear.
- **General Environmental Claims:** Must be based on the full life cycle of the product or service, unless stated otherwise, and should specify the limits of the life cycle. Misleading claims about the total environmental impact are not allowed.
- **Specificity of Claims:** Advertisers should specify whether the claim refers to the product, packaging, service, or a portion of them, unless it is clear from the context.
- **"Free-of" Claims:** Claims about the absence of environmentally damaging ingredients must not mislead consumers, and disclaimers should be added if necessary. As it may be deceptive to claim that a product is "free-of" a substance if it is free of one substance but includes another that is known to pose a similar or higher environmental risk.
- **Use of Certifications:** If certifications or seals of approval are used, advertisers should clarify what attributes have been evaluated, and the certifying agency should be nationally/internationally accredited.
- **Visual Elements:** Visual elements should not convey a false impression of a product's environmental impact, and the use of logos or colour schemes related to nature should be directly connected to environmental claims. E.g., logos representing a recycling process on packaging and/or in advertising material.
- **Aspirational Claims:** Advertisers should avoid making aspirational claims about future environmental

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objectives unless they have clear and actionable plans delineating how these objectives will be achieved.

- **Carbon Offset Claims:** Advertisers should disclose if carbon offsets do not occur within the next two years, and they should not imply that a carbon offset represents an emission reduction if it was required by law.
- **Product Attributes Claims:** Claims about composability, biodegradability, recyclability, non-toxicity, etc., should be qualified, and scientific evidence must support these claims.

By regulating and monitoring advertising content, ASCI plays a crucial role in safeguarding consumer interests and promoting truthful and transparent communication in the marketplace. These guidelines about environment related claims are going to be effective from February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

### ABOUT ADVERTISING STANDARDS COUNCIL OF INDIA (ASCI)

- Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI) was established in 1985. It serves as a self-regulatory body for the Indian advertising industry.
- ASCI's code is an integral part of The Advertising Code enshrined within the Cable TV Networks (Regulation) Act of 1994, providing it with a legal foundation.
- ASCI was formed by representatives from the four pillars of the industry itself
  - Businesses that sponsor/pay for the advertising.
  - Ad agencies that conceptualise and give them a form.
  - Media that carry these ads.
  - Allied professions such as market research that support the development of communication.



ASCI's independent jury (The Consumer Complaints Council or CCC) comprises 40 eminent professionals, both from the industry as well as from civil society, who review complaints on a weekly basis and provide their recommendations.



Four retired high court judges hear appeals from complainants or advertisers who may wish to contest a CCC recommendation.



Eminent technical experts from over 20 fields support the CCC and the Review Panel.

### FUNCTIONS OF ADVERTISING STANDARDS COUNCIL OF INDIA

- **Monitoring Advertisements:** ASCI scrutinises advertisements across various media types and formats, including TV, print, digital, outdoor, radio, point of sale, and claims made on packaging, among others.
- **Consumer Protection Collaboration:** ASCI collaborates closely with different stakeholders to address matters related to consumer protection in the advertising industry.
- **Expertise in Advertising Depictions:** Leveraging its extensive panel of advertising and technical experts, ASCI has established expertise in evaluating advertising depictions, claims, and representations.
- **Pre-Production Advisory:** Many organisations voluntarily submit their advertisements at a pre-production stage to ASCI, seeking non-binding advice on whether the ad might potentially violate any ASCI code.
- **Endorser Due Diligence Service:** ASCI provides an Endorser Due Diligence service, assisting endorsers in meeting their obligations to ensure that the ads they feature in do not make misleading claims and potentially violate the law.

### COMPLAINT MANAGEMENT

ASCI resolves issues in advertisements that relate to

1. Dishonest or misleading ads
2. Indecent or offensive ads
3. Harmful ads
4. Ads that are unfair in competition.

**PRACTICE QUESTIONS****MCQS****Q1. With reference to Advertising Standards Council of India, Consider the following statements:**

1. It is a statutory body constituted under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006.
2. It only provides advice after the advertisement has been released in the market.
3. It resolves issues related to harmful and misleading advertisements but not advertisements that are unfair in competition.

How many of the above statements is/are correct?

- (a) Only one (b) Only two  
(c) All three (d) None

**Q2. With reference to National Legal Service Authority (NALSA), consider the following statements:**

1. It is a constitutional body aimed at providing free legal aid to the indigent.
2. The Chief Justice of India serves as the Executive Chairman of NALSA.
3. Victims of natural disaster as well as man-made disaster are eligible for free legal aid.

How many of the above statements is/are correct?

- (a) Only one (b) Only two  
(c) All three (d) None

**Q3. Consider the following statements about Corruption Perception Index:**

1. This index is published by Transparency International.
2. The index shows that India is the 50 least corrupt countries in the world.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) Only 1 (b) Only 2  
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

**Q4. Consider the following statements about Governor:**

1. Governors are an employee of the Central Government.
2. Governors are free to decide the extent of their discretionary powers.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) Only 1 (b) Only 2  
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

**Q5. Consider the following statements about Rajya Sabha:**

1. All UTs have representation in the Rajya Sabha.
2. Statewise distribution of seats in the Rajya Sabha is given in the Constitution of India.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) Only 1 (b) Only 2  
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

**DESCRIPTIVE QUESTIONS**

**Q1.** Highlight the issues which arise due to the interfering nature of the office of Governor adversely impacting the federal principle. How can this situation be improved?

**Q2.** Rajya Sabha is not only revisionary chamber but also a chamber for containing majoritarian instincts in our democracy. Comment.

**Answers:** 1-d, 2-a, 3-a, 4-b, 5-b

# INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS & SECURITY

# GS PAPER (PRELIMS) & GS PAPER II & III (MAIN)

## INDIA – FRANCE: STRATEGIC PARTNERS

#BILATERAL RELATIONS #MAINS EXHAUSTIVE

PRIMARY  
SOURCE THE HINDU

*French President Emmanuel Macron graced India's Republic Day as the chief guest, marking his third visit to India since 2018.*

### INDIA – FRANCE BILATERAL RELATIONS

India and France share a longstanding and amicable relationship, marked by a **Strategic Partnership established in 1998**. This partnership signifies their

alignment on various global issues, in addition to fostering a robust bilateral connection. The **primary pillars** of this Strategic Partnership include cooperation in **Defence & Security, Space, and Civil nuclear domains**.

Beyond these, both nations have expanded their collaboration to encompass new frontiers such as



security in the **Indian Ocean region**, joint efforts in addressing **climate change** and mutual focus on sustainable growth and development. India and France exhibit a high degree of alignment on regional and global matters.

AREAS OF COOPERATION	
1. Economic	India and France have important bilateral investments and commercial cooperation, particularly in sectors involving IT corridors, smart-cities, railways, capital and trade exchanges, skill development etc. France has emerged as a major source of FDI for India with more than <b>1,000 French establishments</b> already present in India. <b>France is the 11th largest foreign investor</b> in India which accounts for <b>1.68% of the total FDI</b> inflows into India. A <b>Joint Economic Committee</b> which exists at the Ministerial level has setup <b>FAST-TRACK system</b> for French companies in India and Indian companies in France.
2. Defence & Security	India signed an <b>Inter-governmental agreement</b> to purchase 36 Rafale fighter aircraft, with formal induction held in 2020. The <b>P-75 Scorpene Project</b> , involving the construction of <b>six submarines</b> under technology transfer from DCNS (Naval group). Further, both countries hold regular defence exercises; viz. <b>Exercise Shakti (Army)</b> , <b>Exercise Varuna (Navy)</b> , <b>Exercise Garuda (Air Force)</b> . <b>(#PrelimsFact)</b>
3. Diplomatic collaboration	Both nations have extended their collaborative efforts beyond the original pillars of nuclear, space, and defense. The agenda now includes vital aspects such as <b>counterterrorism, intelligence sharing, and cybersecurity</b> . The joint statement issued by them reinforces <b>shared perspectives on ongoing conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza</b> , showcasing an enhanced and diversified collaboration that surpasses the initial focus areas. Notably, <b>France holds the distinction of being the first P-5 country</b> to endorse India's pursuit of a permanent seat in the UN Security

**INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS & SECURITY**

	Council (UNSC). During the visit of PM Modi to France in 2023, both countries shared a document, <b>"Horizon 2047"</b> a strategic road map for the next 25 years, which includes cooperation in defence, space, nuclear energy, climate change and green transitions as well as education and people-to-people ties.
4. Cultural collaboration	Indian culture holds a significant presence in France, evident with the upcoming <b>Vivekananda Cultural Centre in Paris</b> . The <b>'Namaste France' cultural festival</b> , initiated after President Hollande's 2016 visit, showcased diverse aspects of Indian culture across 40 French cities. In reciprocation, <b>'Bonjour India'</b> was organized in India by French communities from November 2017 to February 2018. Moreover, every year at the famous <b>Cannes Film Festival</b> , an Indian delegation participates through an India pavilion to promote Indian films at the international stage.
5. Space & Technology	India and France have a rich history of cooperation in the field of space for <b>over fifty years</b> with <b>ISRO and the French Space Agency, CNES</b> carrying on various joint research programmes and launch of satellites. India and France issued a <b>"Joint Vision for Space Cooperation" in 2018</b> and exchanged cooperative proposals addressing Earth observation, Maritime domain awareness, Global navigation satellite system, exploration of solar system, space transportation system and human spaceflight. <b>CNES is supporting Indian human space flight programme – Gaganyaan</b> , in the field of space medicine and supply of crew support elements.
6. Civil Nuclear Cooperation	An agreement on civil nuclear cooperation was signed between India and France in 2008. Subsequently, in 2010, the General Framework Agreement and the Early Works Agreement for the <b>Jaitapur Nuclear Power Project (JNPP)</b> were signed. ( <b>#PrelimsFact</b> ). Further, India is a member of International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor ( <b>ITER</b> ), a multi-national consortium formed to construct an experimental <b>fusion reactor</b> , located in Cadarache, France. ( <b>#PrelimsFact</b> )
7. Environment	Both India & France laid the foundation of the <b>International Solar Alliance (ISA) at COP 15</b> Paris Summit to develop and deploy cost-effective and transformational energy solutions powered by the sun to help member countries develop low-carbon growth trajectories. A memorandum of understanding (MoU) on renewable energy was also signed which aims to enhance bilateral cooperation in solar, wind, hydrogen, and biomass energy. Notably, <b>India joined the French-led High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People</b> , aiming to safeguard 30% of global lands and oceans by 2030.
8. Diaspora / Community	The estimated Indian community in mainland France, including NRIs, is approximately 1,00,000, primarily originating from French enclaves like Puducherry, Karaikal, Yanam, Mahe, and Chandernagore. France hosts over 50 active Indian community organizations, with major communities hailing from Puducherry, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, and Punjab. During President Macron's visit to India in March 2018, a <b>Migration and Mobility Partnership Agreement</b> was signed, facilitating temporary circular migration. ( <b>#PrelimsFact</b> )
9. Maritime sector	Both nations hold significant influence in Indian ocean and Indo – Pacific region. Emphasizing the critical importance of the Indian Ocean Region, the <b>"Joint Strategic Vision of India-France Cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region"</b> was welcomed by leadership from both countries, outlining a strategic framework for enhancing their ties. In 2022, they jointly established the <b>Indo-Pacific Trilateral Development Cooperation Fund</b> , aiming to support innovative and sustainable solutions for regional countries. Additionally, a <b>reciprocal logistic agreement</b> has been concluded, <b>enabling India to leverage French facilities</b> in Djibouti, Abu Dhabi, and Reunion Island, enhancing its strategic capabilities in the region.



10. Educational  
collaboration

In the field of S&T, the **Indo-French Centre for the Promotion of Advance Research (CEFIPRA)** based in New Delhi, established in 1987, plays a major role by identifying and funding joint proposals for research projects. Both countries have signed an Administrative Arrangement for Cooperation in skill Development and Vocational Training under **Migration and Mobility Partnership Agreement**. Further, **Knowledge Summit** is being organized which is a bilateral forum dedicated to scientific and academic cooperation between France and India.

As the enduring and trusted partnership between India and France continues to evolve, the deepening geopolitical dynamics in the Indo-Pacific region offer a compelling opportunity for an even closer collaboration, particularly in bolstering India's military capabilities.

## INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE

#INTERNATION LAW #INTERNATIONAL  
ORGANISATIONS #MAINS EXHAUSTIVE

PRIMARY  
SOURCE

The Indian  
EXPRESS

*While the rulings of the International Court of Justice are legally binding and immune to appeal, their effectiveness is frequently undermined due to the absence of an enforcement mechanism.*

### ABOUT INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE

- The International Court of Justice (ICJ), often referred to as the World Court, stands as a crucial organ within the United Nations (UN) framework.
- As per **Article 93 of the UN Charter**, all 193 UN members are automatically parties to the ICJ's statute.
- Non-UN members can also join** for example: Switzerland in 1948 and Nauru in 1988.
- While being a party to the statute allows participation in ICJ cases, **it doesn't automatically confer jurisdiction over disputes involving those parties.**
- The court's decisions and opinions hold particular importance as primary sources of international law, **subject to Article 59 of the ICJ Statute.**



### STRUCTURE AND COMPOSITION

- The ICJ comprises **a panel of 15 judges, elected by the UN General Assembly and Security Council for nine-year terms.**
- Representation principles include geographical distribution and the diversity of legal systems.
- The Peace Palace in the Hague, Netherlands**, serves as the ICJ's seat.

### PRECURSORS

- The notion of a permanent international court to resolve disputes traces its roots back to the **Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA), established in 1899 during the Hague Peace Conference.**
- The PCA laid the groundwork for formalized procedures in settling global conflicts.
- The aftermath of World War I saw the formation of the **League of Nations**, ultimately leading to the **establishment of the Permanent Court of International Justice (PCIJ) in 1920.**
- The United States and the United Kingdom jointly proposed the idea, resulting in the formation of the 'Inter-Allied Committee' in 1943.
  - This committee endorsed the adoption of the PCIJ's statute and emphasized the voluntary acceptance of the court's jurisdiction.
  - In 1944, major Allied Powers expressed the need for a comprehensive international organization.
  - The Dumbarton Oaks conference**, held subsequently, suggested the inclusion of an international court.
  - This idea gained further traction during the **1945 San Francisco Conference**, leading to the decision to establish **a new court as a principal organ of the United Nations.**
- The International Court of Justice (ICJ) emerged from these deliberations, with its statute becoming an integral part of the United Nations Charter.
- PCIJ transferred its archives to the newly formed ICJ.

## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS & SECURITY

*It has the following jurisdictional powers: advisory jurisdiction, jurisdiction in contentious cases and the incidental jurisdiction.*

### CONTENTIOUS ISSUES

- All UN member states are parties to the ICJ Statute, allowing them to initiate contentious legal cases.
- This involves settling disputes between countries and **determining state responsibility for crimes committed in violation of international law.**
- In contentious cases, the **ICJ issues binding rulings** exclusively between states that willingly submit to its jurisdiction.
- Jurisdiction in these cases is based **on consent**, whether through special agreements, compromissory clauses in treaties, optional clause declarations, or declarations under the PCIJ Statute.

### INCIDENTAL JURISDICTION

- The ICJ holds incidental jurisdiction to issue **interim measures for the protection of parties' rights during ongoing disputes.**
- Prima facie jurisdiction satisfaction is a prerequisite for the court to indicate interim measures.

### ADVISORY OPINIONS

- Advisory proceedings are limited to **specific UN organs and agencies.**
- Advisory opinions are consultative in nature but carry influence.
- The **General Assembly or Security Council can request opinions**, and the court decides on relevant contributors.
- Despite **their non-binding nature, advisory opinions hold legal weight**, reflecting the court's authoritative interpretation of international law.

### AN ANALYSIS OF THE 'WORLD COURT'

- **Political alignments in ICJ votes:**
  - Historically, judges within the International Court of Justice (ICJ) have often aligned their votes with the political positions of their respective nations.
  - A notable example occurred in 2022 when the court issued an order for Russia to immediately cease its military operations in Ukraine.
- **Lack of enforcement powers:**
  - While the International Court of Justice's (ICJ) decisions are legally binding and cannot be

appealed, **the absence of an independent enforcement mechanism** often leads to defiance.

- The UN Charter grants authority to the **UN Security Council (UNSC)** for enforcing the court's decisions.
- However, the compliance of the **UNSC is susceptible to the power dynamics** among its permanent members.
- **Example:** Potential enforcement of any adverse ruling against Israel faces the obstacle of a likely U.S. veto, considering its strong alliance with Israel.
- **Challenges stemming from non-participation:**
  - The effectiveness of the ICJ faces another challenge through the non-participation of influential member states in its proceedings.
  - In the 2022 case initiated by Ukraine against Russia, the latter declined to submit arguments, citing the perceived absurdity of the lawsuit.
- **Slow and bureaucratic procedures:**
  - Resulting in prolonged durations for the pronouncement of rulings.
  - **The 2019 case filed by Gambia against Myanmar**, addressing the military crackdown on Rohingya refugees, is still in trial years later.

### RELEVANCE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE COURT

- **Evolving scope and significance:**
  - In recent decades, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) has witnessed an expanded role, with states increasingly seeking its intervention in areas such as human rights and environmental violations.
- **Broadening jurisdiction:**
  - The ICJ has successfully extended its influence by encouraging the participation of states that had not previously accepted its compulsory jurisdiction.
  - This has been achieved through the utilization of dispute settlement clauses or special agreements.
  - Notably, Romania's recent declaration supporting the court's jurisdiction has garnered support from over 30 states.
- **Effective implementation of reparation rulings:**
  - Major rulings on reparations have demonstrated the court's efficacy, as concerned parties have adhered to its decisions.

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**INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS & SECURITY**

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- **A noteworthy example is the 2022 judgment in the case of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) v. Uganda.**
  - Uganda was ordered to pay \$325 million to the DRC over five annual instalments for damages to persons and natural resources.
- **Advisory role in peaceful conflict resolution:**
  - Historical instances include giving opinions on issues such as the '**Legality of the threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons**' in 1996 and the '**Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory**' in 2004.
  - In response to the Israel-Palestine conflict, the UN General Assembly in 2022 passed a resolution urging the ICJ to provide its advisory opinion on the legal consequences of Israel's illegal occupation of Palestinian territories.

**WAY FORWARD**

- The International Court of Justice (ICJ) stands as a distinctive force in the arena of global judicial adjudication, navigating its position amid the emergence of various new courts and tribunals.
- Its coexistence with entities like the Permanent Court of Arbitration, the International Criminal Court, the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, and panels under the World Trade Organization has underscored the complex landscape of international law.
- Despite its acknowledged limitations, the ICJ's privileged institutional status and procedural instruments offer untapped potential that is often underestimated.
- Strengthening the ICJ can significantly contribute to the promotion and development of international peace, reinforcing its position within the Charter's machinery for peaceful dispute resolution and the broader system established for the maintenance of global peace and security.

**WORLD ORDER IN STRESS**

#GEOPOLITICAL DYNAMICS

**PRIMARY  
SOURCE****THE HINDU****SECONDARY  
SOURCE****The Indian  
EXPRESS**

*The article highlights the flux in nature of the world stands at a crossroads in 2024. A confluence of forces with resurgent*

*nationalism, protectionism, minilateralism, and the resurgence of interstate wars — challenges the post-World War II order.*

- The article further highlights the US, once the key architect of post-war stability, struggles to bear sole responsibility amid rising nationalism driven by cultural conflicts and political polarization.
- Minilateralism, seen as a pragmatic alternative, may risk fragmenting global governance while addressing challenges.
- The outbreak of interstate wars, such as Russia's invasion of Ukraine, challenges liberal international order's core tenets, including economic interdependence and democratic peace theory.
- Thus the global landscape faces a transformative shift, raising questions about the future trajectory of globalization and international stability.
- **The resurgence of nationalism** The widening gap between the rich and the poor, culture wars, and mass immigration have created fertile ground for the rise of nationalist sentiments, which emphasise national interests and realpolitik over multilateralism and international cooperation.

This is evident by the rise of the populist regimes and hyper nationalist political parties which are advocating for protectionist policies, immigration control measures or tilt towards right wing politics.

**PROTECTIONISM FURTHER STRENGTHENING  
NATIONALISM**

With the fissures erupting in globalisation, weak global economic scenario and the uncertainty associated have pushed both the developing and the developed countries towards adoption of protectionist measures.

There is also a sea change in trade measures which is evident with recent measures India-Middle East-Europe Economic corridor (IMEC) or the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) which though focus on lowering tariffs and barriers but also provides flexibility to the member countries over selection of the areas that they want to partner in. For Example India has chosen not to join the Trade Pillar under IPEF.

**THE RISE OF MINILATERALISM**

The failure of the multilateral bodies to generate consensus and reach the level of common dialogue has resulted into the emergence of Minilaterals. This involves the formation of small groups of countries that share

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**INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS & SECURITY**

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common interests and are willing to coordinate their actions on specific issues.

The countries are also preferring the same as it gives the flexibility to deliberate over narrow range of issues and to reach swift decision.

**THE RETURN OF INTERSTATE WARS**

Recent conflicts, such as Hamas attacks on Israel and Russia's invasion of Ukraine, highlight the ongoing tensions and instability in the world. This reflects a return of an era where an increasing number of leaders believe in using military power to achieve political goals, with consequences as dire as they are unpredictable for global security and stability.

The global world across the geographies is also witnessing situations akin to civil war and grave human rights violation like

- In Venezuela, President Nicolás Maduro threatens to annex Guyana's resource-rich Essequibo region.
- In Myanmar, the military junta faces setbacks following a major offensive by rebel forces.
- The unresolved dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan threatens to erupt into another round of conflict.
- The Horn of Africa teeters on the brink after a deal between Ethiopia and Somaliland sparking concerns about its implications for regional stability

**TERRORISM**

Rise of extremist groups like al-Qaeda and Lashkar-e-Taiba has posed a significant threat to global stability. They utilize violent tactics to achieve their political or ideological goals, causing widespread fear, destruction, and loss of life.

**CHALLENGES IN INDO - PACIFIC REGION**

Indo-Pacific region has indeed become a focal point for geopolitical tensions, strategic competition, and contestation. United States has sought to maintain its presence and influence in the region, while China aims to expand its own influence, resulting in a strategic rivalry that impacts regional dynamics.

**TECHNOLOGY-RELATED RISKS**

The increasing dependence on artificial intelligence (AI) and cyberspace has introduced new vulnerabilities to the world. AI has the potential to be misused for malicious

purposes, such as creating deepfakes that can manipulate public

opinion and undermine trust in institutions. Cyberattacks pose a significant threat to critical infrastructure and sensitive data, potentially causing widespread disruption and economic damage.

In this post-post-Cold War era, the very pillars of the international order established in the aftermath of World War II are on the verge of fundamental reshaping and addressing these present issues requires a multifaceted approach that involves international cooperation, diplomacy, investment in education and development, and promotion of peace and tolerance. Only through concerted global efforts can we hope to build a more secure, prosperous, and just world for all.

**CHINA IN AFRICA**

#INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS #POLITICS OF  
DEVELOPED AND DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

#AFRICA

PRIMARY  
SOURCE THE HINDU

*The Chinese Minister of Foreign Affairs, Wang Yi, visited four African countries, Egypt, Tunisia, Togo and the Ivory Coast as part of its 11th annual trip to Africa to enhance economic and security cooperation with the continent.*

The focus was on execution of three initiatives which included support for Africa's industrialisation, agricultural modernisation, and cooperation on talent development which were agreed at China-Africa Leaders Dialogue.

**TRACING CHINESE PRESENCE IN AFRICA**

- The relations between China and Africa can be traced back to early 1950's when China supported African liberation movements during the Cold War era.
- It was the support of African countries that were paramount in China acquiring its seat in the UN Security Council.
- The trade partnership blossomed between the two as a part of China's "Go Out Policy" and was further cemented with the launch of Forum on China-Africa Cooperation in 2000.
- In 2013, the relationship amplified with China launching its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), building inroads with 52 African countries as signatories.

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## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS & SECURITY

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- Today China has emerged as Africa's largest trading partner, with over one-fourth of its raw material exported to China.
- The importance of Africa for China has increased not only as a region for economic investment (more than **\$170 bn** invested in last 20 years) but also as a strategic gateway for its presence in and near the Indian Ocean Region for which it has established its first international base in Djibouti.

### OBJECTIVES OF CHINA IN AFRICA

#### Critical Resources

**Securing Essential Minerals:** China's interest in Africa is driven by its need for critical natural resources such as cobalt, platinum, and coltan which are crucial for China's emerging tech industry and China has established refineries in Africa for rare earths and minerals which ensures a more direct and efficient access to these vital resources.

#### Geopolitical Aspirations

**Leveraging African Influence:** Africa's significant representation in the United Nations provides China with an opportunity to influence international resolutions, especially on contentious issues such as the South China Sea. China benefits from the vocal support of African nations on the global stage, particularly regarding key policies such as the "One China" policy concerning Taiwan and Hong Kong.

#### Geo-Economic Aspirations

**Promoting Chinese Currency:** China's encouragement for African countries to trade in the Chinese currency (Renminbi - RMB) is part of a larger strategy to increase the global use of the RMB. This is further strengthened by promotion of cross-border yuan-based "*panda bonds*" which allows foreign governments to raise funds from China at lower interest rates, enhancing economic ties and financial cooperation between China and African nations.

#### Commercial Gains

**Market Expansion:** Africa's status as a net importer of finished goods from China provides a lucrative market for Chinese exports. China benefits from the consumption of its products in Africa and also takes advantage of Africa's young population and relatively cheap labour force, not only for domestic production but also to support Chinese exports globally.

**Analysis of Partnership: (Yin and Yang of partnership)**

### YANG (POSITIVES OF THE RELATIONSHIP)

1. **Resource-Driven Investment:** China's investment in Africa has been primarily fuelled by its quest for natural resources. This approach has allowed African nations to leverage their resource wealth for economic development.
2. **Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and Infrastructure Development:** China's significant FDI in Africa has been instrumental in creating infrastructure and industrial parks. This investment has played a crucial role in providing employment opportunities and boosting economic development and has aligned well with the idea of "Made in Africa," as it contributes to the growth of local industries and manufacturing capabilities.
3. **Agricultural Advancements:** The partnership has extended to the agricultural sector, where China has helped African countries achieve self-sufficiency through the introduction of advanced hybrid crops.
4. **Non-political Conditionality:** A distinctive feature of the China-Africa partnership is China's reluctance to impose political conditions on its development aid. This differs from the approach taken by Western countries this has fostered a sense of trust between China and African nations, with the partnership often being described as a 'win-win' scenario.
5. **Mutual Trust and Cooperation:** The lack of political conditions on aid has allowed African countries greater autonomy in pursuing their development goals. This approach is seen as a departure from traditional donor-recipient relationships. And has perceived mutual trust between China and African nations.

### YIN (NEGATIVES OF THE RELATIONSHIP)

1. **Debt Traps and Economic Risks:** China's investment practices may be predatory, leading to debt traps for African nations. This is exemplified by debt crises in countries like Zambia, Angola, and Djibouti, where Chinese loans have been tied to mining concessions. Further there are also concerns that China's strategy of providing low-interest, long-term loans may result in African nations becoming economically dependent on China, leading to what some scholars characterize as neo-colonialism.
2. **Geo-Political Aspirations:** China's 'non-interference' rhetoric is seen as providing a diplomatic shield to authoritarian regimes in Africa. Thus oppressive



regimes remain in power without facing external scrutiny, as long as they maintain friendly relations with China.

### 3. **Limited Involvement of Local Stakeholders:**

Chinese investments often involve direct dealings with governments, side-lining local communities and stakeholders. This lack of involvement can result in projects that may not align with the needs or interests of the local population and has raised concerns about the social and environmental impact of Chinese projects in Africa.

### 4. **Labour Practices and Working Conditions:**

Chinese investments have been criticized for their treatment of labour, including low wages and poor working conditions. The focus on direct government dealings may limit the ability of local workers to negotiate for better conditions and the lack of transparency in Chinese projects makes it difficult to assess the full extent of their social and economic impact on local communities, leading to concerns about exploitation.

- The ethnic armed organisations on the other hand have inflicted a heavy toll on the Myanmar military along the Thai border in the south-east and the Chinese border in the north-east. The victories secured at the end of 2023 by the *Three Brotherhood Alliance* comprising the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army, the Arakan Army, and the Ta'ang National Liberation Army shook the army. However the ethnic organisations remain divided as under different factions some oppose the army, some support it quietly, and some stay neutral.
- The most powerful pillar of the power architecture Tatmadaw or the military has never faced such a dismal situation. Most citizenry is opposed to it, viewing it as a oppressor and harbinger of basic fundamental rights. Further within Army there is now considerable discontent within the military against its current leadership.
- Lastly, various attempts by multilateral organisations like the United Nations, ASEAN, Japan, and Myanmar's neighbours have been unable to move the country towards reconciliation. In particular, that the military has resiled from the ASEAN's Five Point Consensus has dashed the region's hopes for a settlement.

## INSTABILITY IN MYANMAR

### INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

#### #BILATERALRELATIONS #NEIGHBOURHOOD

PRIMARY  
SOURCE

THE HINDU

SECONDARY  
SOURCEThe Indian  
EXPRESS

*The article talks about the situation in Myanmar which has been under military rule for the last three years. The country today is challenged with violent conflicts between the political class, military regime, and ethnic organizations with no one emerging as a clear victor*

The historic analysis of Myanmar's social and political structure reveals that neither before nor during British colonial rule the task of nation-building was done wherein a unified polity where its Bamar majority and a mixture of ethnic and religious minorities could live peacefully.

#### **PRESENT CONTESTATION?**

- There is a power struggle going on between the two centres with political class and ethnic organisations on one side and military on the other.
- The political class, represented by the unrecognised group called the National Unity Government (NUG), has defied the odds to assert itself through militia units called the People's Defence Forces. The NUG has articulated its vision of a 'federal democratic union'. However due to regime's ruthless suppression, its leaders operate underground or from Thailand.

#### **INDIA'S INTERESTS, OPTIONS**

##### **Implications of Myanmar's Military Coup**

- **Border security:** Refugees fleeing military crackdown are entering Mizoram. This has led to disagreement between centre & Mizoram which supports refugees. Centre's instruction of sealing border with Myanmar has irked ethnically and culturally connected communities on both sides. Ex – Chin community.
- **Strategic concern:** India cannot upset the Myanmar junta by providing refuge to the officials fleeing military crackdown.
- **Containing China:** Myanmar being crucial in containing China, India will have to take a calculated steps to not push Myanmar closer to China.
- **Insurgency:** Several ethnic armed organisations are active within Myanmar. Being opposed to Junta, EAOs can lead to escalation in violence across the border.
- **Indian Investments:** Instability would threaten India's investments in Myanmar. Ex. Kaladan Project, Sittwe port, IMT trilateral Highway, Special economic zone in Rakhine.
- **Opportunity to reduce influence of China:** Myanmar army has enjoyed a relatively strong relationship with India. It played a key role in handling the insurgency and Hot Pursuits of India. Su Kyi led democratic

## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS & SECURITY

government was closer to China. China supported it on Rohingya crisis.

- **Drug trafficking:** Drug production has shot up exponentially in Shan Province of Myanmar. The region was earlier large producers of heroine. However, currently it is world's largest producer & exporter of meth (more potent & profitable). Most key individuals controlling the drug trade are pro-junta businessman as well as ethnic militia.

### WAY FORWARD FOR INDIA

- **Maintaining Cordial Relations:** India's current policy of maintaining cordial relations with the government while supporting democracy is acknowledged as successful in strengthening bilateral ties. This approach recognizes the need for a balanced stance. The recommendation is to thus balance friendly ties with the military government while expanding engagement with other stakeholders which can be done via backchannel diplomacy which seeks to protect India's national interests.
- **Non-Interference in Internal Affairs:** Emphasizing non-interference in Myanmar's internal affairs is crucial. This stance aligns with diplomatic principles and respects the sovereignty of nations, reinforcing the idea that India's engagement is based on mutual respect.
- **Communication with Resistance Components:** Establishing communication links with certain components of the resistance, such as the Chin National Army, Arakan Army, and the National Unity Government (NUG), demonstrates an understanding of the evolving situation and the need for inclusive dialogue.
- **Message of Cessation of Violence:** Conveying a strong message advocating the cessation of violence and the restoration of normalcy to both the government and the resistance reflects India's commitment to peace and stability in the region.
- **International Conclave:** The proposal to convene a *Peace Conclave involving senior officials from Quad member states and the ASEAN Troika* reflects a multilateral approach. This platform could provide a space for dialogue and collaboration on addressing the Myanmar situation and also acknowledging India's support for the transition to a federal democracy
- **Focus on Aung San Suu Kyi:** Highlighting the need for immediate freedom for Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is a human rights and justice-oriented component in

India's approach. This reinforces the importance of individual liberties in the broader diplomatic context.

### IMPORTANT GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATIONS OF MYANMAR



## PRELIMS NUGGETS

## FREE MOVEMENT REGIME

#INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS #PRELIMS NUGGETS

PRIMARY  
SOURCE THE HINDU

*Government of India is all set to scrap the Free Movement Regime (FMR) along the Myanmar border.*

## ABOUT FREE MOVEMENT REGIME (FMR)

- The border between India and Myanmar runs for **1,643 km** in the four states of **Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland, and Arunachal Pradesh**.
- The FMR is a mutually agreed arrangement between the two countries that allows tribes living along the border on either side to **travel up to 16 km inside the other country** without a visa.
- It is usually valid for a year, and person **can stay for up to two weeks per visit**.
- The **FMR was implemented in 2018** as part of the **India's Act East policy** at a time when diplomatic relations between India and Myanmar were on the upswing.

## ILO WARNING

#INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS #PRELIMS  
NUGGETSPRIMARY  
SOURCE THE HINDU

*ILO in its 'World Employment and Social Outlook' report highlighted that global unemployment rate is set to increase in 2024.*



## ABOUT

## INTERNATIONAL

## LABOUR ORGANISATION (ILO)

- It is the **only tripartite** U.N. agency which **brings together governments, employers and workers**, to set labour standards, develop policies and devise programmes promoting decent work for all women and men.
- It was created in **1919**, under League of Nations, as part of the **Treaty of Versailles** that ended World War I, to

reflect the belief that universal and lasting peace can be accomplished only if it is based on social justice.

- In **1946**, the ILO became a **specialized agency** of the newly formed United Nations.
- It is headquartered in **Geneva, Switzerland**.
- In **1969**, the ILO received the **Nobel Peace Prize** for improving fraternity and peace among nations, pursuing decent work and justice for workers, and providing technical assistance to other developing nations.
- The **Governing Body** is the executive body of the International Labour Organization. It **meets three times a year**, in March, June and November.
- The ILO constitution **permits any member of the United Nations** to become a member of the ILO.
- ILO is also a member of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG).
- The International Labour Conference, held in June 2019, adopted a landmark **ILO Centenary Declaration** (focuses on the major challenges and opportunities for the future of work, ranging from technology to climate change, from demographic shifts to the need for new skills).

## REPORTS RELEASED BY ILO

- World Employment and Social Outlook
- World Social Protection Report
- Global Estimates of Modern Slavery
- Global Wage Report
- Global Employment Trends for Youth

## DAVOS SUMMIT

#INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS #PRELIMS  
NUGGETSPRIMARY  
SOURCE The Indian  
EXPRESS

*The World Economic Forum is holding its annual meeting from January 15 to 19 in Davos, Switzerland.*

## ABOUT WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM (WEF)

- **Professor Klaus Schwab** founded WEF in 1971, originally called the **European Management Forum**, as a non-profit foundation based in **Geneva, Switzerland**.
- It is the International Organization for **Public-Private Cooperation**.
- It introduced the concept of '**stakeholder capitalism**' i.e. a form of capitalism in which companies do not only optimize short-term profits for shareholders, but seek long term value creation, by considering the needs of all their stakeholders, and society at large.
- **In 2015**, the Forum was **formally recognised as an international organization**.
- The Forum is **chaired by Founder** and Executive Chairman Professor Klaus Schwab.
- The **Managing Board**, chaired by the Forum's President, **Børge Brende**, acts as the executive body of the World Economic Forum.
- The **Great Reset Initiative** is an economic recovery plan drawn up by the World Economic Forum (WEF) in **response to the COVID-19 pandemic**.
- The **Global Redesign Initiative (2010)** of WEF was a global, multistakeholder dialogue on the future of international cooperation. Set up during the global financial crisis, its purpose was to stimulate thinking and debate about how the international community and its institutions and organizations in their widest sense can be adapted to contemporary challenges.
- **Reports released by WEF:**
  - Global Risks Report
  - Global Gender Gap Index (**#2017 Prelims**)
  - Fostering Effective Energy Transition Report
  - Travel and Tourism Development Index
  - Global Cyber Security Outlook
  - Global Competitiveness Report (**#2019 Prelims**)

## IRAN'S ATTACK ON "ANTI-IRANIAN TERRORIST GROUPS"

#GLOBAL CONFLICTS #INTERNATIONAL  
RELATIONS #PRELIMS NUGGETS

PRIMARY SOURCE THE HINDU

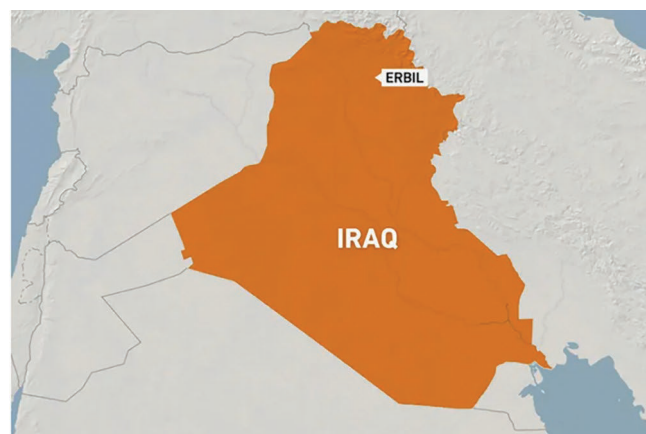
*Iran launched missile and drone attacks in Iraq, Syria and Pakistan.*

### WHY IRAN LAUNCHED THE STRIKES?

- Iranian security personnel were killed in **Rask**, a town closer to Pakistan border, by **Jaish al-Adl (the Army of Justice)** militant group in December 2023. Iran carried out a surprise attack in **Panjur, a border town in Pakistan's Baluchistan**.
- **Syria's (Daesh terrorist group)** suicide bombers struck crowds gathered near the tomb of the revered IRGC (Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps) general Qasem Soleimani in **Kerman (city in Iran) in January 2024**. In response, Iran launched ballistic missiles into **Syria's Idlib region**.
- In Iraq, the IRGC claimed responsibility for targeting an alleged Israeli facility. Iran launched a missile strike, into **Erbil**, resulting in the destruction of **Mossad's (Israel's external security agency) spy headquarters in the Kurdistan region**. The attack is purportedly a response to recent Israeli actions, including the assassination of Iranian and pro-Iranian commanders.

### KEY FACTS FOR PRELIMS

- **Jaish al-Adl, or the "Army of Justice"**, is a Sunni militant group founded in 2012 that largely operates in Pakistan.
- **Daesh (also known as ISIL, Islamic State, or ISIS)** is a terrorist group operating in Syria.
- **The Houthis, 'Supporters of God'**, is a Shia Islamist political and military organization that emerged from Yemen in the 1990s and backed by Iran.
- Places in news: **Erbil, Kurdish region, Kerman, Idlib**.







## BALTIC SEA

#INTERNATIONAL GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATIONS

#PRELIMS NUGGETS

PRIMARY  
SOURCE

THE HINDU

*Ukraine's drone attack strikes Russian Novatek Fuel Terminal, on Baltic Sea, aimed at infrastructure connected with Moscow's war machine.*

**ABOUT BALTIC SEA**



- The Baltic Sea is an **arm of the Atlantic Ocean** that is enclosed by **Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia, Sweden,** and the North and Central European Plain.
- It **separates the Scandinavian Peninsula from the rest of continental Europe.**
- It is a **shelf sea and marginal sea** of the Atlantic with limited water exchange between the two, making it an inland sea.
- The Baltic Sea drains through the **Danish Straits into the Kattegat** by way of the Øresund, Great Belt and Little Belt.
- It includes the Gulf of Bothnia (divided into the Bothnian Bay and the Bothnian Sea), the Gulf of Finland, the Gulf of Riga and the Bay of Gdańsk.
- The Baltic Sea is connected by artificial waterways to the White Sea via the White Sea–Baltic Canal and to the German Bight of the North Sea via the Kiel Canal.



# THE ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF WEST AFRICAN STATES (ECOWAS)

#INTERNATIONAL GROUPINGS #PRELIMS NUGGETS

PRIMARY  
SOURCE

THE HINDU

*The military regimes of Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger announced their withdrawal from the West African Bloc ECOWAS.*



ECOWAS COMMISSION  
COMMISSION DE LA CEDEAO  
COMISSÃO DA CEDEAO

## ABOUT ECOWAS

- The Heads of State and Government of fifteen West African Countries established the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) when they signed the ECOWAS Treaty (**Treaty of Lagos**) in **1975 in Lagos, Nigeria**.
- The **only Arabic-speaking Member Mauritania** withdrew in December 2000. Mauritania recently signed a new associate-membership agreement in August 2017.

## MEMBER STATES



- It was set up to foster the **ideal of collective self-sufficiency** for its member states. As a **trading union**, it is also meant to create a single, large trading bloc through economic cooperation.
- Headquarters: **Abuja, Nigeria**.
- Aim of ECOWAS:** is to promote co-operation and integration, leading to the establishment of an economic union in West Africa to raise the living standards of its peoples, and to maintain and enhance economic stability, foster relations-among Member States and contribute to the progress and development of the African continent.
- ECOWAS consists of two operating institutions to implement policies: the **ECOWAS Commission and the ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development (EBID)** – formerly known as the Fund for Cooperation.
- ECOWAS Community Court of Justice** was created by a protocol signed in 1991. The jurisdiction of the court

allows rulings on disputes between states over interpretations of the Treaty. Like its companion courts, the European Court of Human Rights and East African Court of Justice, it has **jurisdiction to rule on fundamental human rights breaches**.

- The estimated 300 million citizens of the community can ultimately take ownership for the realization of the new vision of moving from an ECOWAS of States to an **"ECOWAS of the People: Peace and Prosperity to All" by 2050**.

**Note:** The region of West Africa is located west of north-south axis lying close to 10° east longitude. The Atlantic Ocean forms the western as well as the southern borders of the West African region. The northern border is the Sahara Desert, with the **Ranishanu Bend (#PrelimsFact)** generally considered the northernmost part of the region. The eastern border lies between the **Benue Trough (#PrelimsFact)**, and a line running from **Mount Cameroon to Lake Chad**.

## PRACTICE QUESTIONS

## MCQS

**Q1. Consider the following countries:**

- |            |            |
|------------|------------|
| 1. Denmark | 2. Russia  |
| 3. Finland | 4. Estonia |
| 5. Ukraine | 6. Poland  |

How many of the countries mentioned above share boundary with Baltic Sea?

- |                |               |
|----------------|---------------|
| (a) Only three | (b) Only four |
| (c) Only five  | (d) All six   |

**Q2. Consider the following pairs:****Regions sometimes****mentioned in news****Country**

- |           |             |
|-----------|-------------|
| 1. Erbil  | Iran        |
| 2. Idlib  | Syria       |
| 3. Panjur | Afghanistan |
| 4. Kerman | Israel      |

How many pairs given above are not correctly matched?

- |                      |                    |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| (a) Only one pair    | (b) Only two pairs |
| (c) Only three pairs | (d) All four pairs |

**Q3. With respect to World Economic Forum (WEF), consider the following statements:**

- It is non-profit organisation which was originally called as European Management Forum.
- The Global Redesign Initiative was launched by WEF in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- It introduced the concept of 'stakeholder capitalism' which seek long term value creation by taking into account the needs of all their stakeholders.

- It released Global Cybersecurity Outlook 2024 to highlight the profound impact of emerging technologies.

How many of the statements given above is/are correct?

- |                |              |
|----------------|--------------|
| (a) Only one   | (b) Only two |
| (c) Only three | (d) All four |

**Q4. With reference to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), consider the following statements:**

- It was created in 1919 as a part of Treaty of Versailles.
- It's constitution permits any member of the United Nations to become a member of the ILO.
- ILO's Centenary Declaration calls for human-centered approach to the future of work.
- It is the only UN agency which has not received the Nobel Peace Prize.

How many of the statements given above is/are correct?

- |                |              |
|----------------|--------------|
| (a) Only one   | (b) Only two |
| (c) Only three | (d) All four |

**Q5. With reference to the Free Movement Regime (FMR), consider the following statements:**

- It allows the movement of people within 6 km on either side of Indo - Myanmar border without visa.
- It allows the stay up to 7 weeks per visit.
- It was implemented in 2014 as a part of India's Act East Policy.

How many of the statements given above is/are correct?

- |               |              |
|---------------|--------------|
| (a) Only one  | (b) Only two |
| (c) All three | (d) None     |

## DESCRIPTIVE QUESTIONS

- In the light of changing global order, critically analyse the significance and challenges of the strategic partnership between India and France?
- To what extent has the International Court of Justice (ICJ) been effective in promoting global justice and resolving international disputes?

**Answers :** 1-c, 2-c, 3-c, 4-b, 5-d

# SOCIETY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

# GS PAPER I & GS PAPER II (MAIN)

## HUMAN TRAFFICKING

#TRAFFICKING #MAINS EXHAUSTIVE

PRIMARY  
SOURCE THE HINDU

*As children, these women were trafficked in Sundarbans region in West Bengal. Their panicked parents went to the police for help, but once they were rescued, they were no longer accepted into the communities they left.*

### HUMAN TRAFFICKING

As per **the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)**

- Human Trafficking is the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring, or receipt of people through force, fraud, or deception, with the aim of exploiting them for profit.
- Men, women, and children of all ages and from all backgrounds can become victims of this crime, which occurs in every region of the world.
- The traffickers often use violence or fraudulent employment agencies and fake promises of education and job opportunities to trick and coerce their victims.

### STATUS (WORLD AND INDIA) OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

As per the **A Global Report on Trafficking in Persons (published by UNODC)**

- Most common form of **human trafficking (79%) is sexual exploitation**. The victims of sexual exploitation are predominantly women and girls.
- Second most common form of human trafficking is **forced labour (18%)**
- Worldwide, almost **20% of all trafficking victims are children**. However, in some parts of Africa and the Mekong region, children are the majority (up to 100% in parts of West Africa).
- **As per NCRB (2022), as many as 6,036 victims were trafficked**. This involved 2,878 children and 3,158 adults.

### CHALLENGES PERTAINING TO CURBING THE HUMAN TRAFFICKING

- **Poverty and Unemployment:** Economic hardships and lack of employment opportunities contribute to vulnerability. Lack of opportunity and better life prospect make them susceptible to fall for lure of money.
- **Lack of Awareness:** Limited awareness among the public, especially in rural areas, about the issue of human trafficking results in many people (including potential victims) failing in recognizing the signs or understand the risks, thus falling prey.
- **Poor Implementation of Provisions and laws:** While India has laws in place to combat human trafficking, there are challenges in the effective implementation and enforcement of these laws. Legal loopholes and delays in the judicial process can hinder the prosecution of traffickers which leads to traffickers evading justice. Thus, these provisions fail to act as deterrents.
- **Cross-Border Trafficking:** India shares borders with several countries, and cross-border trafficking is a significant challenge. Lack of Coordination and cooperation between neighbouring countries affect the efforts of combating trafficking networks that operate across borders.
- **Cyber Trafficking:** The increasing use of technology has led to the emergence of cyber trafficking, where traffickers exploit online platforms to lure and exploit victims.
- **Gender disparity:** Gender-based discrimination and inequality contribute to the vulnerability of women and girls to trafficking.
- **Victim Stigmatization:** Victims of human trafficking often face social stigma and discrimination, making it difficult for them to reintegrate into society. This can result in underreporting of cases and a lack of cooperation from victims in legal proceedings.

- **Data Collection and Reporting:** Incomplete or unreliable data on human trafficking makes it challenging to assess the full extent of the problem and implement targeted interventions.
- **Demand for cheap labour and Services:** Persistent demand from various sections of society for cheap and exploitative services acts a fuel for sustenance of such practices.

#### CONSTITUTIONAL & LEGISLATIVE PROVISIONS RELATED TO TRAFFICKING IN INDIA

- **Trafficking in Human Beings or Persons is prohibited under the Constitution of India under Article 23 (1)**
- **Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956 (ITPA)** is the premier legislation for prevention of trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation.
- **Criminal Law (amendment) Act 2013** provide for comprehensive measures to counter the menace of human trafficking including trafficking of children for exploitation in any form including physical exploitation or any form of sexual exploitation, slavery, servitude, or the forced removal of organs.
- **Protection of Children from Sexual offences (POCSO) Act, 2012**, is a special law to protect children from sexual abuse and exploitation.
- There are other specific legislations enacted relating to trafficking in women and children like **Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006, Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976, Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986, Transplantation of Human Organs Act, 1994**, apart from specific **Sections in the IPC, e.g. Sections 372 and 373** deal with selling and buying of girls for the purpose of prostitution.

#### ADMINISTRATIVE MEASURES AND INTERVENTIONS

- **Anti-Trafficking Cell (ATC):** Anti-Trafficking Nodal Cell was set up in the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), to act as a focal point for communicating various decisions and follow up on action taken by the State Governments to combat the crime of Human Trafficking. MHA conducts coordination meetings with the Nodal Officers of Anti Human Trafficking Units nominated in all States/UTs periodically.

#### INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS ON TRAFFICKING

- **UN Convention:** India has ratified the United Nations Convention on Transnational Organized Crime

(UNTOC) which has as one of its Protocols Prevention, Suppression and Punishment of Trafficking in Persons, particularly Women and Children.

- Various actions have been taken to implement the convention and as per Protocol, The Criminal Law Amendment Act, 2013 has been enacted wherein human trafficking has specifically been defined.
- **SAARC Convention:** India has ratified the SAARC Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution.
- **Bilateral mechanism:** For dealing with cross border trafficking and to address the various issues relating to prevention of Trafficking, a Task Force of India and Bangladesh was constituted.

## MISMATCH BETWEEN HIGHER EDUCATION AND SKILL REQUIREMENTS IN THE JOB MARKET

#EDUCATION #MAINS EXHAUSTIVE

PRIMARY  
SOURCE THE HINDU

According to the Periodic Labour Force Survey, the unemployment rate among graduates is higher than in many other developing countries due to higher education out of touch with the skill requirements in the job market.

#### Unemployment rate in India:

According to PLFS Report,

- Unemployment has reduced to 3.2% in 2022-23, from 6.1% in 2017-18.
- Graduate degree unemployment rates have reduced to 13% in 2022-23 from 17% in 2017-18.
- Unemployment rate for young workers aged 18 to 29 with graduate degrees, has reduced to 27% in 2022-23 from 36% in 2017-18.
- Share of graduates in the labour force has risen to around 15% by 2022-23 from 5% in 1993-94.

#### REASON FOR MISMATCH BETWEEN HIGHER EDUCATION AND SKILL REQUIREMENTS IN THE JOB MARKET

- **Slow curriculum updates:** Higher education institutions (HEIs) often have slow processes for

updating curricula. This results in a lag between the emergence of new skills in the job market and their incorporation into academic programs.

- **Governance issues:** As HEIs are affiliated with UGC or AICTE etc. they face challenges of over-centralisation, lack of autonomy and transparency.
- **Limited industry collaboration:** Some higher education institutions may lack effective collaboration with industries. This can lead to a disconnect between academic content and the practical skills required in the workplace.
- **The degree-oriented education system:** Focus on rote memorization and exams, which may not foster critical thinking, creativity, and skills.
- **Faculty skill gap:** Faculty members may themselves lack up-to-date knowledge and skills relevant to rapidly changing industries, result in the transmission of outdated information and a lack of emphasis on cutting-edge technologies and practices.
- **Inadequate focus on research and innovation:** Due to scarcity of funds, ill-equipped labs and weak linkage of Research, higher education and Industry. **India's research and development (R&D) expenditure as a proportion of GDP is only 0.7% and in Korea is 4%.**

#### GOVERNMENT INITIATIVE TO ADDRESS MISMATCH BETWEEN HIGHER EDUCATION AND SKILL REQUIREMENTS IN THE JOB MARKET

- **Scheme for Promotion of Academic and Research Collaboration (SPARC), 2018:** For improving the research ecosystem of India's Higher Educational Institutions.
- **Education Quality Upgradation and Inclusion Program (EQUIP) :** To enhance access, inclusion, quality, excellence, and employability.
- **Technical Education Quality Improvement Programme of Government of India (TEQIP):** To upscale and support ongoing efforts in improving the quality of technical education.
- **Institute of Eminence (IoE):** To empower Higher Educational Institutions and to help them become world-class teaching and research institutions.
- **National Education Alliance for Technology (NEAT):** To provide technology solutions using Artificial Intelligence for customized learning or e-content in niche areas having highly employable skills.

#### MEASURES TO ADDRESS MISMATCH BETWEEN HIGHER EDUCATION AND SKILL REQUIREMENTS IN THE JOB MARKET

- Establish mechanisms to ensure that university curricula are regularly updated to reflect industry trends and emerging technologies.
- Establish advisory boards with industry representation, promote joint research projects, and encourage industry professionals to participate in curriculum development to strengthen industry-academia linkage.
- Incorporate modern technologies and tools into teaching methods to enhance the learning experience and also ensures that students are familiar with the technologies used in their future workplaces.
- Establish channels for continuous feedback from employers about the performance of graduates in the workplace. Use this feedback to make necessary adjustments to educational programs.
- Emphasize the development of soft skills, including communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and critical thinking, to enhance graduates' overall employability.

## MEDICAL TERMINATION OF PREGNANCY (AMENDMENT) ACT, 2021

#WELFARE MECHANISM #MAINS EXHAUSTIVE

PRIMARY SOURCE The Indian EXPRESS

Delhi High Court permitted a depressed widow to terminate her 29-week pregnancy, citing the risk of mental harm. Despite the **Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Act's 24-week limit**, special considerations apply to specific groups, including survivors of rape and vulnerable individuals.

#### ABOUT MEDICAL TERMINATION OF PREGNANCY (AMENDMENT) ACT, 2021

- Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Act, 2021 alters the MTPA 1971.
- Amendments increase the ambit and access of women to safe abortion services and will ensure dignity,



**autonomy, confidentiality and justice for women who need to terminate pregnancy.**

• **Features of Amendment act:**

- The Amendment raises the upper gestation limit from **20 to 24 weeks** for particular groups of women, **include rape survivors, incest victims, and other vulnerable women (such as differently-abled women, minors), among others.**
- It replaces the **terms “married woman and her husband” with the terms “woman and her partner”**. As a result, **an unmarried woman can also terminate pregnancies** within the time limit prescribed under the Act.
- **Upper gestation limit not to apply in cases of substantial foetal abnormalities** diagnosed by Medical Board.
- The **ground of failure of contraceptive** has been extended to women and her partner up to 20 weeks
- For **safeguarding the privacy and confidentiality of women**, section 5A of the Act **penalise medical practitioners who fail to protect the privacy and confidentiality** of women who desire to terminate their pregnancy.

GESTATIONAL LIMITS	MTP ACT 1971	MTP AMENDMENT ACT, 2021
Until 12 Weeks	Advice of one doctor	Advice of one doctor
12 to 20 Weeks	Advice of two doctors	Advice of one doctor
20 to 24 Weeks	Only to save the life of the pregnant woman	Advice of two doctors if the pregnant woman falls under categories prescribed below.[v]
After 24 Weeks	Only to save the life of the pregnant woman	Approval of Medical Board, and only if there is substantial foetal "abnormality"

**LIMITATIONS OF THE AMENDMENT ACT**

- **Time frame for Medical Board's decision not specified:** The amended Act does not stipulate the **time limit within which the medical board must make its decision**, result in further complications for pregnant women.

- Since the amended Act exclusively allows for the termination of pregnancies in the case of women, it is unclear if transgenders will be included under the amended Act.
- **Unavailability of qualified medical professionals to terminate pregnancies: The All-India Rural Health Statistics (2018-19) reveal** a severe shortage of gynaecologists in rural India. With only 1,351 serving at community health clinics, there's a substantial 75% shortfall (4,002 doctors), posing a significant obstacle to ensuring safe abortions.
- **Judicial inconsistency:** Lower courts sometimes making flawed decisions that higher courts later correct on appeal. However, pregnant women experiencing physical hardships may not have sufficient financial resources for filing an appeal against an unjustifiable judgement resultantly becoming a victim of the tedious judicial system..
- There is **no provision for ensuring the accountability when death of the mother is caused due to the denial to abort .**
- Section 3 of the MTP Act, which rests the decision of undergoing a medical termination solely on the doctor's opinion, also **points to lack of autonomy for women.**
- **Frontline healthcare workers (around 95%),** the first points of contact for women—are also unfamiliar with the amendment to the MTP Act, 1971.

**Suggested measures:**

- Need law on **comprehensive abortion care** is essential to ensure access to safe services, health and safety standards, financial accessibility, and protection from harassment (**Shantilal Shah committee**).
- Social media **emerged as one of the key sources of information for women.** This should be used by the respective state health authorities to share messages on different clauses/sub-clauses of the MTP (Amendment) Act, 2021 in simple languages among women.
- Provide a reasonable time frame within which the medical board must make its decision.
- Advocate for the establishment of a fast-track appeal process, particularly in cases involving maternal health risks or physical hardships.

- Propose the inclusion of provisions that hold healthcare providers accountable for maternal deaths resulting from the denial of abortion when it is legally permissible. **This can act as a deterrent and ensure that medical decisions prioritize maternal health.**
- **Need a mechanism for regular review and updates of the MTP Act to address emerging issues and ensure that the legislation remains relevant and effective.**

## CHILD MARRIAGE

#VULNERABLE SECTION

PRIMARY SOURCE: THE HINDU

A recent study on child marriage in India, published in *The Lancet*, has highlighted a positive trend of decreasing child marriages across the country. However, the study also pointed out that four states, namely Bihar (16.7%), West Bengal (15.2%), Uttar Pradesh (12.5%), and Maharashtra (8.2%), still account for more than half of the total number of child marriages among girls in India.

**The study titled 'Prevalence of girl and boy child marriage across States and Union Territories in India, 1993–2021' reveals significant findings about the state of child marriage in India.**

- High Prevalence of Child Marriage in Girls: one in five girls in India is still married before reaching the legal age.
- Regional Variations: While some Indian states have successfully reduced the prevalence and headcount of child marriages among girls, others like West Bengal have struggled significantly.
- National Figures: Nationally, the percentage of women aged 20–24 years who were married before 18 is 23.3%.

These findings underscore the ongoing challenge of addressing child marriage in India, particularly in regions like West Bengal, and highlight the need for targeted policies and interventions.

### WHAT IS CHILD MARRIAGE?

Child marriage, a practice found in certain societies, particularly in India, typically involves two distinct forms.

- The first form is where a young child, often a girl under eighteen, is married off to an adult man. This form is more direct and immediate in its execution.

- The second form is more of a future arrangement: parents of a young girl and boy agree to marry their children to each other when they both reach a more suitable age. In this latter case, the boy and girl usually do not meet until the time of their wedding ceremony.
- This practice, deeply rooted in cultural and social norms, often raises significant concerns regarding the rights and welfare of the children involved.

### LAWS FOR MINIMUM AGE FOR MARRIAGE

- Hindu marriage act (1955), Indian Christian marriages act (1872) and Special Marriage Act (1954) prescribed **minimum age of marriage as 18 years for bride and 21 years for groom.**
- **Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006** prohibits marriage **below 18 years for women & 21 years for men.**

Despite legal age of marriage for women being set at 18 years, it was found that in almost **all States, women continued to get married before they turned 18.** For ex.

**\*\*Given facts published by UNICEF- Ending child Marriage -A profile of progress in India (2023)**

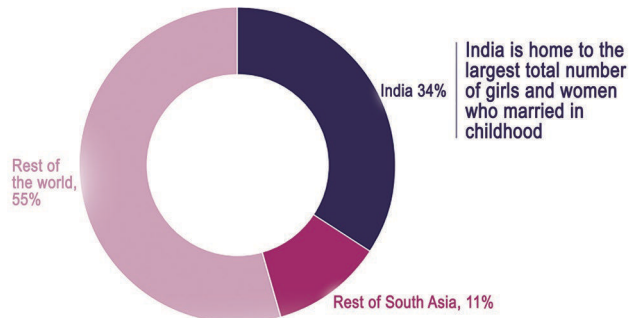


Fig. 1 Number of girls and women who were first married or in union before age 18, India, South Asia and rest of the world

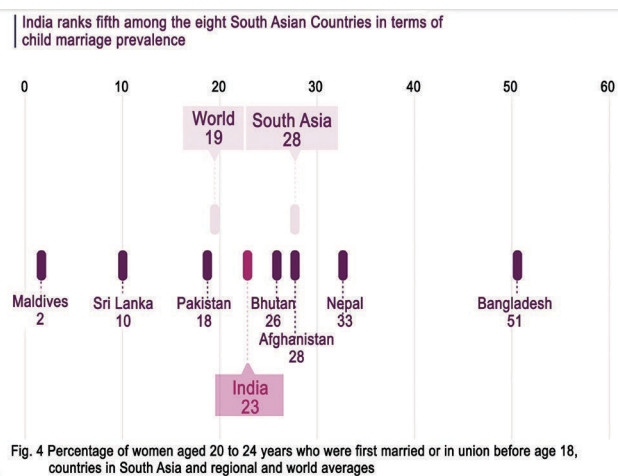
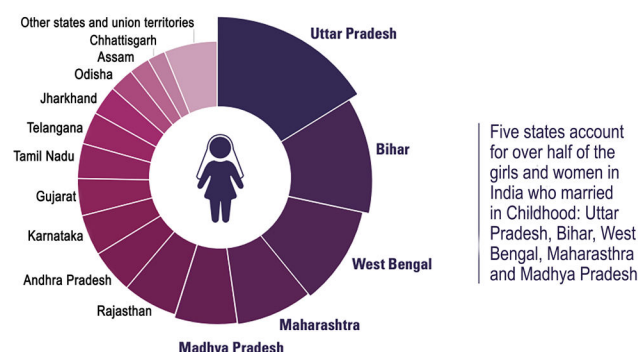


Fig. 4 Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18, countries in South Asia and regional and world averages



Levels vary across India: At least 40 per cent of young women were married in childhood in West Bengal (42 per cent), Bihar (41 per cent) and Tripura (40 per cent), compared to 1 per cent in Lakshadweep

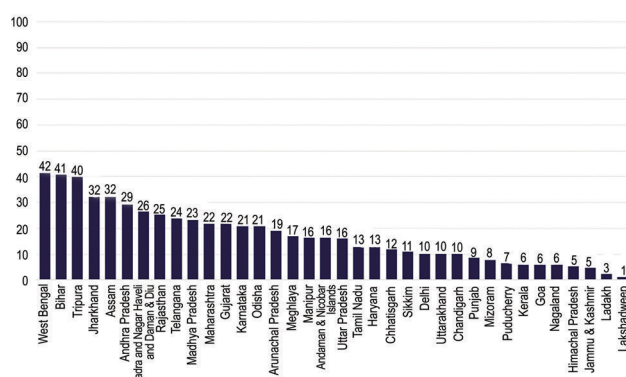


FIG. 5 Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18, by state or union territory

## REASONS FOR CHILD MARRIAGE

### 1. Socio-cultural reasons

- **Traditions and cultural mandates:** The concept of "honour" is deeply entrenched in many societies, where a girl's chastity is closely tied to family honour. Families may marry off girls early to ensure they remain virgins until marriage, thus upholding the family's reputation.
- **Demand for dowry :** The illegal yet persistent practice of dowry puts pressure on families to marry daughters early, as the dowry amount tends to increase with a girl's age and education level. As Girl children are sometimes viewed as an **economic burden**, and marrying them off can be seen as a way to alleviate **financial stress through the system of dowry**.
- **Caste, community and ethnic pressure :** If the children are married at an early age, they will not **exercise deviant behaviour** of searching of their

partners on their own, which can be out of the **caste or community groups**.

- **Economic and Educational backwardness:** The prevalence of child marriage is higher among poorer households. Financial constraints often lead to earlier marriages for girls. Because of this Child marriage is more common in **rural areas and amongst certain social groups like Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes**. **Education level** greatly affects the likelihood of child marriage, with a higher incidence among women with no or primary education.
- **Safety and security problems of girls:**
  - Where schools are far from home, the journey to and from school can be dangerous for girls. Risks include abduction, trafficking, or assault.
  - Marrying a girl at a young age can protect her from sexual violence and harassment.

### 2. Economic reasons

- Poverty in rural areas makes families believe that they do not need to go for family planning as more children will lead to more hands to work. Families think that boy will remain with them and girls will be married off in other families. So, they wish to marry them at an early age.

**3. Historical reasons:** There was a belief that girls should get married before the onset of puberty.

**4. Trafficking:** Child marriage can intersect with human trafficking, where impoverished families may be coerced into selling their daughters into marriage or prostitution for financial gain, often to support their sons, thereby subjecting the girls to harm and exploitation.

### 5. Legal and policy related measures:

- The current act **does not annul such marriages**. It only gives the power to the bride to call off the marriage once she is an adult.
- Ineffective enforcement of legislation and laws
- Absence of females from process of law-making.

**6. Awareness and Limitations of Social Protection Programs:** Families at risk of child marriage often **lack awareness of available social protection programs**,

which tend to focus on cash transfers without addressing the complex issues surrounding child marriage.

#### **IMPACT OF CHILD MARRIAGE**

- **Low levels of educational attainment:** Child brides in India face significant hurdles in continuing their education. Statistics show that fewer than 2 in 10 married girls remain in school, which highlights the disruption of education due to early marriage.
- **Violence, Exploitation, and Abuse:** Child marriage violates children's rights and places them at high risk of various forms of violence, exploitation, and abuse. While it affects both girls and boys, girls are disproportionately impacted.
- **Economic Consequences:** child marriage can initiate an intergenerational cycle of poverty, where those married as children are more likely to lack the skills and knowledge needed to secure employment that would enable them to lift their families out of poverty.
- **Early pregnancy results in adverse health outcomes for both mother and child:** Incidence of early marriage and childbearing are important causes of undernutrition in India. Children born to teenage mothers are more likely to be undernourished than children of adult mothers. India is home to more stunted children than any other country and is one of the ten countries with the largest burden of teenage pregnancy.
- **Population Growth:** Child marriage often leads to earlier and more frequent childbearing, contributing to population growth due to limited access to education and family planning resources.
- **Restricted Mobility:** Child marriage can restrict the mobility of young brides and reduce their access to mass media such as TV, newspapers, and the internet compared to their unmarried counterparts. This restriction can further limit their exposure to information, education, and opportunities for personal development.
- **Limited or even absent peer networks:** as their social interactions are often restricted to their spouse's

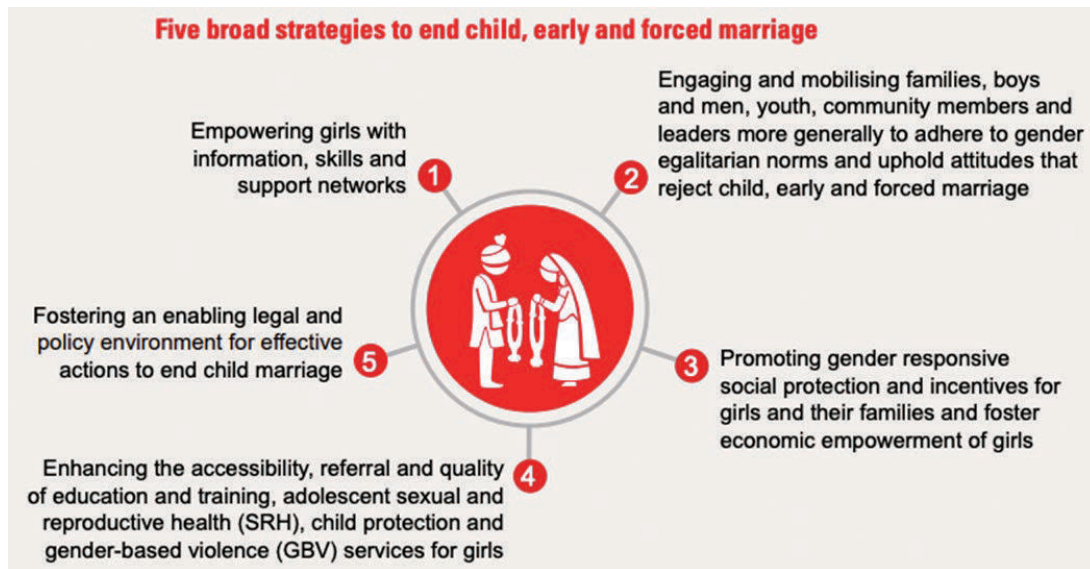
family and household. This can isolate them from their peers and limit their opportunities for social development and support.

#### **GOVERNMENT MEASURES**

- **The Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929:** known as the Sarda Act, was a law enacted to prohibit the solemnization of child marriages in India. It set the minimum age of marriage at 14 years for girls and 18 years for boys. It extends to the whole of India except the State of Jammu and Kashmir and it applies also to all citizens of India within and beyond India.
- **Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006:**
  - It was implemented in India to address the shortcomings of the Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1929.
  - This updated law increased the legal age of marriage to 18 years for girls and 21 years for boys and established harsher punishments for those who perform, permit, or promote child marriages.
  - It envisages preventing child marriage with punishments of rigorous imprisonment for two years and/ or fine of Rs. 1 lakh.
  - The Act also provides for the appointment of Child Marriage Prohibition Officer whose duties are to prevent child marriages and spread awareness regarding the same.
- In addition, several national flagship programmes, including the **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) scheme, the Scheme for Adolescent Girls (SAG) (previously known as SABLA), the Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram (RKSK) (adolescent health) programme, various national- and state level conditional cash transfer (CCT) programmes for girls have been implemented to prevent child marriage like- Kanyashree Prakalpa(West Bengal)** is a conditional cash transfer scheme aimed at incentivising the schooling of all teenage girls between the ages of 13 and 18, and simultaneously discouraging child marriage.



## STEPS MAY EVENTUALLY REDUCE THE AGE OF MARRIAGE



- Plugging the legal loopholes & Progressively the minimum age for marriage for girl child should be increased from 18 to 21. (Government had introduced the Prohibition of Child Marriage (Amendment) Bill, 2021 in Parliament in December 2021 for raising the age of marriage of women to 21 years to bring it on par with the men and the Bill has been referred to a Parliamentary Standing Committee.)
- Enforcement of Right to Education Act, provisions should be made for free education of girl child till the university level.
- Conditional cash transfer schemes to improve attendance of girls in schools and skill training.
- Ensuring a safe environment to women free from constant threat of rape and sexual assault which is why girls are married off early.
- Creating awareness among females, families and communities at large about need to educate females and marriage at an appropriate age.
- Focused attention at locations where there is more prevalence of child marriages.
- Civil Society organizations and NGOs should be encouraged to tackle the issue.

Child marriage is now firmly on the global development agenda, most prominently through its inclusion in Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 5.3, which aims to eliminate the practice by 2030. Although indicator

5.3.1 measures child marriage among girls, the practice occurs among boys as well. Regardless of gender, marriage before adulthood is a breach of children's rights.

## CASTE-BASED DISCRIMINATION IN PRISONS:

# SALIENT FEATURES OF INDIAN SOCIETY

#PRISON REFORM

PRIMARY  
SOURCE THE HINDU

*Supreme Court of India found that prison manuals in more than 10 States, including Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Odisha, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Kerala, continue to have provisions which **sanction discrimination and forced labour on the ground of caste in prisons.***

### ABOUT CASTE SYSTEM

It is a form of **social stratification that involves a system of hierarchically** ranked, closed endogamous strata, the membership of which is ascribed and between which contact is restricted and mobility theoretically impossible.

### PRISON STATISTICS IN INDIA

- Of the total 4,78,600 prison inmates in the country, 3,15,409 or 65.90% belong to the Scheduled Castes,



Scheduled Tribes and the Other Backward Class categories in 2020 (NCRB).

### **REASON FOR CONTINUITY OF CASTE BASED DISCRIMINATION IN PRISONS**

However, despite all modern forces of change, the caste system continued to exist in Indian society.

- **Idea of purity and impurity: The Prisons Act, 1894** contain specific provisions concerning prisons' functioning and the regulation of prisoners' actions. Since **prisons are a State list** subject, the **Prisons Act guides respective state governments to formulate their respective prison manual rules. E.g.:**
- **Accordingly, Rajasthan Prison Manual prescribed** that hospital attendants must belong to a "good caste".
- Similar provisions continue in several states like, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, and Punjab. The "Mehtar" and "Chandal" castes, communities historically associated with manual scavenging and cleaning, have been explicitly allocated tasks of sweeping and cleaning work.
- Prison manuals safeguard the **privileged position of Savarna Hindus (Brahmins)** by guaranteeing their exclusive rights to prepare and transport food for all inmates.
- **Institutionalised bias:** The prison system reflect and perpetuate societal biases. Discrimination based on caste may be ingrained in the attitudes and practices of prison staff, affecting the treatment of inmates. **E.g.: Dalits even have a separate ward in prisons.**
- **Deep-rooted social structures:** The caste system has historically dictated social interactions, leading to hierarchies and inequalities. **E.g.: Treatment of inmates from the denotified tribes as "habitual offenders.**
- **Gaps in laws:** The Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013, **does not encompass prison administration, thereby rendering it ineffective in prohibiting manual scavenging within Indian prisons.**
- **Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 :** The **Act ignore the casteist allocation of jobs in prison and unable to protect the core dignity of human beings (Article 21).**

### **INITIATIVE TAKEN TO DEAL WITH CASTE BASED DISCRIMINATION IN PRISON**

#### **1. Constitutional Provision:**

- **Article 15:** Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth.
- **Article 17:** Untouchability is abolished and its practice in any form is forbidden.
- **Article 21:** No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty.

#### **2. International initiative:**

- **Nelson Mandela Rules:** To treat prisoners with inherent dignity and to prohibit torture and other ill-treatment and state that there should be no discrimination amongst the inmates on the grounds of status.

#### **3. Government Initiative:**

- **Model Prison Manual of 2016: Based on Nelson Mandel Rules,** aims at bringing in basic uniformity in laws, rules and regulations governing the administration of prisons and the management of prisoners all over the country.

#### **4. Judiciary intervention:**

- **Rama Murthy Judgment (1997):** SC identified nine issues concerning prisons, such as overcrowding, trials being delayed, the torture and ill-treatment of prisoners, neglect of health and hygiene, insubstantial food and inadequate clothing.
- **Shatrughan Chauhan v. Union of India:** SC said the legal procedure adopted to deprive a person of his life or liberty must be fair, just and reasonable and the protection of Article 21 of the Constitution of India inheres in every person, even death-row prisoners, till the very last breath of their lives.

### **MEASURE TO BE ADOPTED TO BRING EQUALITY AMONGST THE PRISONERS**

#### **• Recommendations given by Mulla Committee:**

- Setting up an All India Service called the Indian Prisons & Correctional Service for fostering a more inclusive and equitable approach within the prison system.
- **National Commission for Prisons** to function as a specialized advisory body for all prison and allied matters.

- **Independent and regular inspection of prisons:** Can be a very effective tool in improving conditions of prisons
- All state governments should amend outdated prison manuals and adopt the Model Prison Manual of 2016.
- **Sensitization policies** that prohibit discrimination and harassment within the prison environment.

## ANGANWADI SERVICES

#HEALTH #MAINS EXHAUSTIVE

PRIMARY SOURCE THE HINDU

*Maharashtra's Anganwadi workers and helpers have been on strike for 46 days now. They have been demanding basic nutrition for children, whose per-day food cost for two meals has been ₹8 a child since 2014 and increase the rent for centres.*

### ABOUT ANGANWADI SERVICES

- Anganwadi means '**courtyard shelter**', a type of rural child care centre in India.
- It was **started in 1975 as part of the Integrated Child Development Services program** to combat **child hunger and malnutrition**.
- The Anganwadi system, launched under the Anganwadi Services Scheme, renamed as **Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0**, is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme under the Ministry of women and child development.
- It is one of the flagship programmes of the Government of India providing **early childhood care and development of the beneficiaries i.e., children in the age group of 0-6 years**, pregnant women and lactating mothers through a large network of Anganwadi workers (AWW) and Helpers (AWH).
- Anganwadi workers (AWW) and Helpers (AWH) are the basic functionaries of the ICDS who run the Anganwadi Centres (AWCs), and implement the ICDS scheme.
- **Anganwadi Centres (AWCs): Provide a platform for rendering all services under the scheme.**
- A single Anganwadi worker (AWW), **chosen from the community, manages one village or area**. These workers undergo training in various areas such as health, nutrition, and childcare.

- There are a total 14 lakh AWCs sanctioned across the country out of which 13.63 lakh AWCs are operational till 2018(PIB).

### CRITERIA FOR RECRUITMENT OF ANGANWADI WORKERS

- As per guidelines, Anganwadi Workers under the Anganwadi Services Scheme are selected from the local village by a Committee constituted by the State Government/ UT Administration.
- The minimum prescribed qualification is Matriculation **and age limit is 18-35 years for engagement of Anganwadi Workers (AWWs) and Anganwadi Helpers (AWHs).**

### ANGANWADI SYSTEM: HOW DOES IT OPERATE?

- Primarily established for rural development, the Anganwadi system is managed by Anganwadi workers who cater to individual villages within a specified area.
- These workers, who hail from the community itself, undergo approximately four months of training in various domains including health, nutrition, and child care.
- Each Anganwadi worker is responsible for approximately 1000 individuals and reports to a supervisor known as the Mukhya Sevika.

### SERVICES PROVIDED BY ANGANWADI WORKERS

- It is a **part of the Indian public health care system**.
- Basic health care activities include contraceptive counselling and supply, supplementary nutrition, non-formal pre-school education, nutrition, and health education, immunization, and health check-up
- The centres may be also used as depots for oral rehydration salts and basic medicines.

### BENEFITS GRANTED TO ANGANWADI WORKERS AND HELPERS

- **Honorarium** : AWWs and AWHs, being honorary workers, are paid monthly honoraria as decided by the Government from time to time, which is uniform in all States/UTs.
  - AWWs at main Anganwadi Centres (AWCs) are paid an honorarium of ₹ 4,500/- per month and AWHs are paid ₹2,250/- per month.
  - In addition to the honorarium paid by the Government of India, most of the States/UTs are also giving monetary incentives to these workers out of their own resources.

- **Leave:** They are allowed paid absence of 180 days of maternity leave and 20 days annual leave.
- **Award:** In order to motivate AWWs and give recognition to good voluntary work, a Scheme of Award for AWWs has been introduced, both at the National and State level.
- The Award comprises Rs.50,000/- cash and a Citation to AWW and Rs.40,000/- to AWHs.
- **Uniform:** Government has made a provision for a set of two Uniform (saree/suit per annum @ Rs.500/- each).
- **Insurance coverage:** AWWs and AWHs been covered under, Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima yojana (PMJJBY), Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima yojana (PMSY) and Anganwadi Karyakartri Bima yojana (AKBY).

#### **IMPORTANCE OF ANGANWADI PROGRAMME IN INDIA**

- **Accessibility and affordability of healthcare:** Providing the right healthcare facilities to the rural population of India especially mother and child remains a significant challenge. Many individuals are unaware of the programs available to them.
- **Establishment of social connections within the community:** These centers offer women a sense of involvement in their communities, providing opportunities for participation in activities they might not otherwise have access to.
- **Nutritional support:** Every child requires proper nutrition for healthy development, both physically and mentally. Adequate nutrition in early childhood increases the likelihood of developing into a healthy adult.
- **Access to Government programs:** Anganwadi workers play a crucial role as the primary source of access to government schemes for rural communities. Through their assistance, mothers and parents become informed about essential health services and benefits.
- **Providing early childhood care and education:** Children are heavily impacted by their surroundings and the people around them during their early life and early childhood care and education (ECCE) is more than just school readiness.
- It attempts to develop a child's social, emotional, cognitive, and physical needs holistically in order to lay

a firm and comprehensive basis for lifetime learning and wellbeing.

- **Awareness and counselling:** They provide valuable information to mothers and communities about proper health care practices, nutrition, and hygiene. Additionally, they offer counselling on family planning, immunizations, and the importance of education.
- **Poverty alleviation:** By addressing health and nutritional needs, the Anganwadi programme indirectly contributes to poverty alleviation. Healthy and well-nourished individuals are better positioned to participate in education and employment opportunities, breaking the cycle of poverty.
- **Women empowerment:** The programme involves a significant number of female workers, contributing to women's empowerment by providing them with employment opportunities. It also promotes the active involvement of women in decision-making processes related to healthcare and nutrition.

#### **GOVERNMENT INITIATIVE**

- **Collaboration with MGNREGA:** The government, in collaboration with the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), is undertaking the construction of 400,000 Anganwadi Centers (AWCs) nationwide as part of the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme.
- **Digitalization of Anganwadi Services:** AWCs are digitally strengthened with smartphones for **POSHAN tracking systems**, and monitoring devices.
- **Enhanced training approach:** The Ministry has developed a thorough training strategy for Anganwadi Services personnel, ensuring regular training sessions. Anganwadi Workers undergo a 26-day job training program, focusing on improving their knowledge, comprehension, and skills pertaining to various Acts, Policies, Programs related to women and children. The training also covers the establishment of dynamic Anganwadi Centers and the effective execution of Early Childhood Care and Education activities.

#### **CHALLENGES IN FUNCTIONING OF ANGANWADI SERVICES**

**According to Niti Aayog:**

- **Cramped and poorly ventilated:** Many AWCs across all sampled states, especially in urban areas, **are cramped and poorly ventilated**. They do not have enough space for the children to play and learn

properly. Many AWCs do not have equipment like swings, sand/water areas etc. due to lack of space and/or funding.

- **Insufficient AWCs:** Discrepancies exist between the approved and functioning AWCs in different states, with disparities ranging from 2% to 8.37% (PIB).
- **Lack of basic facilities:** More than 80% Anganwadi centres in the rural areas of the state lack toilet facilities and do not have access to safe drinking water. **E.g. In Odisha more than 80% Anganwadi centres in the rural areas lack basic toilet facilities.**
- **Lack of awareness:** The community lacks awareness about the role of an AWC and the services offered by AWC. Moreover, the AWC has a perception of poor service delivery in terms of Pre-School Education (PSE), especially in rural Gujarat and in Rajasthan.
- **Operational ineffectiveness:** Despite the essential requirement of smartphones for ICDS, numerous AWWs have not been provided with these devices, thereby impacting their operational effectiveness.
- **Issues with honorarium:** AWWs are not officially recognized as government employee status and receive monthly honorariums well below the minimum wage, ranging from Rs. 5,000 to Rs. 10,000. The inadequacy of compensation presents challenges in fulfilling basic needs, affecting their commitment to their duties. There is also the issue of delays in receiving honorariums contributing to financial insecurity and hardships for AWWs.
- **Issues with budgetary allocation:** The scheme experiences inconsistency in the percentage or delays in budget allocations over the years. **For example: In Delhi the budget assigned to rent a place for AWCs is insufficient.** The rental norms of Rs.6000/- per month do not allow renting a reasonably hygienic room for the functioning of the ICDS, leading to improper planning and implementation, along with non-adherence to financial and physical targets.
- **Unpaid duties:** AWWs are frequently assigned various tasks, including Covid-19 duties, Census duties, or implementing government schemes, without receiving additional financial compensation. The resulting heavy workloads **contribute to burnout, impacting the quality of services they are able to provide.**
- **Inadequate human capital:** Several States/UTs, such as Telangana, Bihar, and Karnataka, face a significant

number of vacant positions for Supervisors, AWWs, and AWHs.

- **Lack of proper training:** The initial training for AWWs lacks sufficient preparation to address the multifaceted challenges they face on a daily basis.
- **Non-availability of instruments for child development:** Height and weight measuring instruments in AWCs.

#### MEASURES FOR EMPOWERMENT OF ANGANWADI WORKERS

- **Need for Community Hub models for AWCs:** Anganwadi Hubs can be developed by combining three to four AWCs in areas with high population density.
- **Addressing equipment shortages:** Immediate attention required for the availability of height and weight measuring instruments in AWCs.
- **Infrastructure assessment and funding allocation:** The Government should set up a committee to identify the AWCs with bad infrastructure that is classroom, kitchen, building and playground and such centres should be allocated more funds to improve their infrastructure.
- **Priority focus on basic amenities:** Prioritizing the establishment of drinking water and toilet facilities in AWCs for improved service delivery.
- **Corporate partnership for infrastructure enhancement:** The Identified AWCs can be referred to big corporations, so that it can be adopted by them to improve their infrastructure.
- **Promoting awareness and attendance:** As the AWWs suffer from Low attendance of beneficiaries it becomes a task of the AWCs to promote the services of AW among the needy by rural communities. Pamphlets can be issued to the rural houses about the services rendered by the AWCs.

## TRIBES AND DISPLACEMENT

#INDIAN SOCIETY #DIVERSITY OF INDIA  
#VULNERABLE SECTION #MAINS EXHAUSTIVE

PRIMARY SOURCE THE HINDU

*Many villages were displaced during the construction of Hirakud Dam in Odisha. Many villagers still await proper*

*rehabilitation and ownership documents over the land over which they were resettled. To address their issues, Odisha government has recently launched an initiative to regularise land ownership of such tribals.*

#### **ABOUT DISPLACEMENT OF TRIBALS**

Forced relocation or movement of indigenous or tribal communities from their traditional lands or habitats.

There are two types of displacement:

- Displacement affected by natural disasters in the form of draughts, floods, earthquakes and cyclone;
- Displacement due to developmental projects like dams, mines, thermal power plants, industries, railways, roads, ports and others.

#### **Reason for displacements of tribals:**

According to the Lok Sabha: Till 2019,

- Development Displacement Population is the single largest category among all Internally Displaced Populations (IDPs).
- In India around 50 million people have been displaced due to development projects in over 50 years.
- Around 21.3 million developments induced IDPs include those displaced by dams (16.4 million), mines (2.55 million), industrial development (1.25 million) and wildlife sanctuaries and national parks (0.6 million).

#### **Positive impacts of displacement:**

- A few persons may experience improvement in their status by way of increase in the size of landholdings.
- A rise in income may occur in certain cases by the employment opportunities created by the Project.
- A break in some oppressive social hierarchies may also result.

#### **NEGATIVE IMPACT OF DISPLACEMENT ON TRIBES**

Land is the center of tribal life. The effects of the displacement spill over generations. There are following impact of displacement on tribals:

##### **1. Social-Cultural Problems:**

- **Cultural disintegration:** Displacement can lead to the erosion of traditional customs, languages, and practices as tribes are separated from their cultural heritage, weaken the transmission of cultural knowledge from one generation to the next. E.g. Dongria Kondh tribe in Odisha faced cultural disintegration due to mining projects threatening their sacred Niyamgiri Hills.

- **Decline in Joint Family System:** In Odisha, the pre-displacement level of 40 nuclear and 60 joint families was changed into 74 and 26 respectively with both tribal and non-tribal families showing the same trend of breaking down of joint family to nuclear families.
- **Social cohesion and identity:** Displacement can fragment tribal communities, leading to breakdown of social networks and the loss of a collective identity, result in social conflicts and challenges in rebuilding a sense of community and solidarity.
- **Loss of status of women:** Adverse conditions compel women and young girls to seek employment outside their homes, rendering them highly vulnerable to physical and economic exploitation. Moreover, gender discrimination is evident in the resettlement process, where unmarried daughters and widows often face challenges in obtaining land titles.

##### **2. Economic challenges:**

- **Economic hardship:** The loss of access to natural resources and traditional means of subsistence can lead to economic hardships and increased dependence on external assistance and increase indebtedness.
- **Loss of land:** Tribes often have a deep connection to their ancestral lands, which provide not just a physical space but also a spiritual and cultural foundation: E.g. Sardar Sarovar Dam has led to the displacement of numerous tribal communities. The loss of their ancestral land affects their traditional livelihoods, which are often dependent on agriculture and forest resources.
- **Disruption of livelihoods:** It often results in the disruption of traditional livelihoods, such as agriculture, fishing, or craft-making, leading to a decline in income-generating activities.

**3. Health issues:** Forced relocation may expose tribes to new diseases such as influenza, measles and chicken pox, inadequate healthcare, and poor living conditions, leading to a decline in overall health.

**4. Disruption of education:** Tribal children often face disruptions in their education when displaced. Loss of access to schools, cultural disconnect in mainstream educational systems, and challenges in adapting to new environments can hinder educational opportunities for tribal youth.



**5. Psychological impact:** Tribes can find themselves marginalized in new environments, facing discrimination and challenges in integrating into mainstream societies, can lead to psychological trauma, stress, and a sense of loss among tribal individuals.

#### **STEP TOWARDS REHABILITATION AND RESETTLEMENT OF INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS (IDPS):**

##### **1. Constitutional Provision:**

- Art. 164: Appoint a special minister for tribal welfare in the states of MP, Bihar, and Orissa.
- Art. 275: Allows special grant in aids to states for tribal welfare
- Art.16: Reservation in public employment in the ratio of their population
- Art. 15: Reservation in public educational institutes in their population ratio.
- Art. 243D: Provides reservation of seats for SC and STs in panchayats.
- Art. 233T: Provides reservation of seats for SCs and STs in municipalities.
- Art. 330: Provides reservation of seats for STs in Lok Sabha.
- Art. 334: Provides reservation of seats for STs in State legislatures.
- Article 338A: Special officer post for protection of interests of STs
- Article 339: Control the union over the welfare of the scheduled tribe.
- Article 342: Empower the president to declare a community as ST.

##### **2. Legislative measures:**

- **National Rehabilitation and Resettlement Policy, 2007:** To minimize displacement and promote, as far as possible, non- displacing or least displacing alternatives also ensure adequate rehabilitation package and expeditious implementation of the rehabilitation process with the active participation of those affected.
- **Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013 (RFCTLARR Act, 2013) :** Regulates land acquisition and lays down the procedure and rules for granting compensation, rehabilitation and resettlement to the affected persons in India.

- It is progressive in that it is the first to legally mandate comprehensive Resettlement and Rehabilitation of Project.
- Affected Persons; but the definition of 'public purpose' remains too wide and will not help in minimizing displacement.
- **Provisions for ST in LARR:** As far as possible, no acquisition of land shall be made in the Scheduled Areas. In case of acquisition or alienation of any land in the Scheduled Areas, the prior consent of the concerned Gram Sabha or the Panchayats or the autonomous District Councils shall be obtained.

- **Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act (PESA Act), 1996:** Powers granted to Gram Sabha under PESA like consultation before the land acquisition, prevent land alienation, power to enforce prohibition, prior approval of all developmental projects, selection of beneficiaries of poverty alleviation and other schemes of individual benefits, control over money lending activities etc.

#### **RECOMMENDATION GIVEN BY XAXA COMMITTEE (2014) FOR SECURING RIGHTS OF DISPLACED PEOPLE**

- In pursuance of the PESA, 1996, Land Transfer Regulations/Tenancy laws of all Schedule V Areas should be suitably amended to ensure Gram Sabha's participation in the identification, investigation and restoration of lands to tribal people.
- Legal loopholes and ambiguities should be removed in all Scheduled Area Land Regulations and Tenancy laws. For example, such removal must ensure that tribal land is not transferred for purposes such as the settlement of refugees, housing, etc.
- Unutilised land must be given back to tribes for their resettlement.
- Provision of free legal services for affected tribal people by NALSA and related organisations.
- There should be a formation of an appellate authority involving members from the judiciary revenue department and Scheduled Tribes department. The formation of such an appellate authority would help in improving the procedure of restoration cases, which usually takes a long time.
- Monitoring cells also be recommended to set up at district as well as state level so that the rehabilitation of land becomes faster and easier.

# DELHI HIGH COURT REAFFIRMED THE BAN ON INCESTUOUS 'SAPINDA' MARRIAGES

#SALIENTFEATURESOFINDIANSOCIETY #MAINS  
EXHAUSTIVE

PRIMARY  
SOURCE

The Indian  
EXPRESS

**A challenge to the constitutionality of Section 5(v) of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 (HMA), was rejected by the Delhi High Court (Neetu Grover vs Union of India Ors.). The Section 5(v) of the HMA prohibits marriage between two Hindus if they are 'Sapindas' of each other, unless the custom or usage governing each of them permits of a marriage between the two.**

## DELHI HIGH COURT'S STAND

- The Court held that **'an established custom', is necessary to justify a Sapinda marriage.**
- The High Court also held that the **'choice of a partner in a marriage can be subject to regulation'** as unregulated choices in marriage may lead to the legitimacy of incestuous relationships.

## WHAT ARE INCESTUOUS 'SAPINDA' MARRIAGES?

- These are between individuals who are related to each other within a certain degree of closeness.
- Under **Section 3 of the Hindu Marriage Act of 1955, 'Sapinda Marriages' are defined.**
  - As per this section, *"two persons are Sapindas of each other if one is a lineal ascendant of the other within the limits of Sapinda relationship, or if they have a common lineal ascendant who is within the limits of Sapinda relationship with reference to each of them."*
  - A Hindu individual, on the mother's side, cannot marry anyone who is **within three generations of them in the 'line of ascent'.**
    - This means, on mother's side, an individual cannot marry their sibling (first generation), their parents (second generation), their grandparents (third generation), or an individual who shares this ancestry within three generations.

- And on the father's side, **the prohibition applies to anyone within five generations of the individual.**
  - This means, on the father's side, this prohibition would extend up to their grandparents' grandparents, and anyone who shares this ancestry within five generations.
- A marriage will be declared void, if it is found to be violative of Section 5(v) for being a Sapinda or Incestuous Marriage and **if there is no established custom that allows such a practice.**
  - **Such marriage will be considered invalid from the very beginning and treated as it never took place.**

## EXCEPTIONS TO THE PROHIBITION AGAINST SAPINDA MARRIAGE

- There is only one exception, which can be found within the same provision, i.e., **Section 3(a) of the HMA. This section provides definition for the word 'Custom'.**
  - A custom has to be 'continuously and uniformly observed for a long time', and should have gained enough legitimacy among Hindus in a local area, tribe, group, or family, such that it has obtained 'the force of law'.
  - However, **a custom shall not be protected from prohibition even after these conditions are fulfilled.**
  - The custom must be *'certain and not unreasonable or opposed to the public policy' and 'in case of a rule applicable only to a family', it should not have been 'discontinued by the family'.*

## LEGALITY OF MARRIAGES SIMILAR TO 'SAPINDA MARRIAGES' IN OTHER COUNTRIES

- The laws on relationships that are considered incestuous are less stringent in several European countries, than in India.
- **Penal Code of 1810, France:** It was enacted by Napoleon Bonaparte and was also enforced in **Belgium.**
  - The crime of incest was abolished under the Penal Code of 1810, so long as the marriage was between consenting adults.
  - A new Penal Code was introduced in Belgium in 1867 to replace the French code, but incest remains legal.
- Incest is also not criminalised under Portuguese law.

- Incest is considered a crime under Italian law, only if it causes a 'public scandal'.
- In all the 50 states in the United States, incestuous marriages are banned. Although, incestuous relationships are allowed between consenting adults in New Jersey and Rhode Island.

**CONCLUSION**

Delhi High Court highlighted the **intricate balance between individual choice in a marriage and the boundaries set by law and the societal norms**. This balance becomes important, in the context of marriages within extended family networks.

## AADHAAR-BASED PAYMENT SYSTEM (ABPS) MANDATORY FOR NREGS

#SCHEMES #PRELIMSNUGGETS

PRIMARY  
SOURCE THE HINDU

*Centre's said from January 01, 2024, all wages under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) scheme must be paid through an Aadhaar-based payment system (ABPS).*

**ABOUT NREGA AADHAAR-BASED PAYMENT SYSTEM (ABPS)**

- It is a method of disbursing payments to MGNREGA workers using their **unique 12-digit Aadhaar number as their financial address**.
- Under this system, workers' Aadhaar numbers are linked with their job cards as well as their bank accounts, this account must be connected to the **National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) mapper**.
- Under Mahatma Gandhi NREGS, **APBS is in use since 2017**.
- The system was **initially made mandatory from February 1, 2023**. However, through several extensions, the Centre allowed this requirement to persist until December 31, 2023. As no further extensions were granted to states beyond December 31, the ABPS became mandatory from January 1, 2024.
- The government grant exemptions on a "**case-by-case basis**" if any gram panchayat experiences

**"technical issues" or Aadhaar-related problems until the resolution of the underlying issue.**

- The aim is **to streamline wage payments and ensure transparency, reducing the chances of fraud**.

**BENEFITS OF ABPS**

- Ensuring that payments are made to the rightful beneficiaries, **reducing the chances of fraud and corruption and eliminating intermediaries**.
- Reduces paperwork, minimizes delays, and **ensures a faster and more streamlined disbursement of wages**.
- Encourages **financial inclusion** by promoting the use of bank accounts.
- Digital records make it easier to **track and audit payments**.

**CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH ABPS**

- **Deletion of job cards:** 7.6 crore job cards deleted since April 2022 due to discrepancies between the two documents, the Aadhaar and the job card, such as different spellings of workers' names.
- **Right to work (Article 41):** Compelling the use of ABPS with more than one-third of the total MNREGA registered workers rendered ineligible will inevitably lead to the denial of the right to work.
- **Exclusion of workers:** Till December 2023, 12.7% of these active workers are still not eligible **due to technological adeptness or a lack of proper documentation**.
  - Active workers are those who have worked for at least one day over the last three financial years.
- **Privacy concerns:** Mandatory linking of Aadhaar to NREGS payments raises privacy concerns, as it involves collecting and storing biometric and personal information.

**PRERANA**

#SOCIALJUSTICE #EDUCATION

PRIMARY  
SOURCE THE HINDU

*The Department of School Education & Literacy, under the Ministry of Education, Government of India, has introduced 'Prerana: An experiential learning program.' This initiative is geared towards providing a profound, distinctive, and*

*motivational experience to its participants, with the ultimate aim of nurturing leadership qualities among them.*

#### ABOUT PRERANA, A LEARNING INITIATIVE

- 'Prerana', is headquartered at the **vernacular school (established in 1888 in Vadnagar)**, Gujarat.
- This weekly residential program will host **20 students** from different parts of the country **on a rotational basis**.

#### OBJECTIVES

- The essence of Prerana lies in its unwavering commitment to integrate the principles of the **Indian education system and the philosophy of value-based education**, which serves as a **fundamental pillar of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020**.
- This thematic framework aims to inspire the youth, fostering a deep respect for **Bharat's unity in diversity** and **embodying the spirit of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam'** (the world is one family).

#### NINE-CORE VALUE-BASED THEMES

- The curriculum of 'Prerana' has been developed by **IIT Gandhinagar**.
- This unique program is built **upon nine core value-based themes: self-respect and humility, courage and determination, hard work and dedication, compassion and service, diversity and unity, truthfulness and cleanliness, innovation and curiosity, faith and trust, and independence and responsibility**.

#### ACTIVITIES UNDER PRERANA

- The meticulously planned schedule of the program feature activities such as yoga, and meditation sessions, coupled with experiential learning, thematic discussions, and engaging hands-on educational endeavours.
- The sessions promise visits to historical and heritage sites, inspirational film screenings, creative activities related to mission life, talent shows, and more, ensuring a well-rounded learning experience.
- Additionally, students will actively participate in diverse activities encompassing indigenous knowledge systems, cutting-edge technologies, and insights derived from inspirational figures.
- Mentors from prestigious institutions will guide the participants in this transformative initiative.

#### SELECTION PROCESS

- It is designed for **students in Classes 9 to 12**.

- Interested students can register online through the portal **prerana.education.gov.in**, where they will undergo a selection process outlined on the platform.
- Once selected, **the 20 participants, consisting of 10 male and 10 female students**, are expected to carry the ethos of 'Prerana' into their respective communities.

## MULYA PRAVAH 2.0

#SOCIAL JUSTICE #EDUCATION

PRIMARY  
SOURCE THE HINDU

*The University Grants Commission (UGC) has been issuing many regulations, guidelines and directives. One such guideline is Mulya Pravah 2.0, a modified version of Mulya Pravah, which was notified in 2019. It seeks to inculcate human values and professional ethics in higher education institutions. The stated intention is to build value-based institutions by orienting individuals and institutions towards developing a deep respect for fundamental duties and constitutional values and bonding with the country.*

#### Mulya Pravah 2.0

- As part of its Quality Mandate initiative in 2019, the UGC developed guidelines on "Mulya Pravah — Inculcation of Human Values and Professionals Ethics in Higher Educational Institutions".
- These guidelines have now been revised to include the key **recommendations of the National Education Policy, 2020 (NEP-2020)**.
- Revised guidelines, Mulya Pravah 2.0 - Inculcation of Human Values and Professional Ethics in Higher Education Institutions proposes the **curriculum and pedagogy of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)** to develop
  - Deep respect towards Fundamental Duties and Constitutional Values among the students
  - Bonding with one's country, and conscious awareness of the roles and responsibilities in a changing world
  - Including universal human values of
    - Truth (satya)
    - Righteous conduct (dharma)
    - Peace (shanti)
    - love (prema)
    - Non-violence (ahimsa)

- Scientific temper
- Citizenship values
- Life-skills.

## SWACHH SURVEKSHAN AWARDS 2023

#HEALTH #PRELIMS NUGGETS

PRIMARY  
SOURCE THE HINDU

Indore and Surat were named the joint winners of the cleanest city in the **Swachh Survekshan Awards 2023**.

### ABOUT SWACHH SURVEKSHAN AWARDS (SSAS) : URBAN

- **Launched in:** 2016
- **Launched as:** Part of the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, to assess urban areas for their levels of cleanliness and active implementation of Swachhata mission initiatives in a timely and innovative manner.
- **Launched by:** Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs with Quality Council of India as its implementation partner.
- **Methodology for measuring cleanliness:** Citizen feedback and field assessment.
- **Objective:** To encourage large scale citizen participation and create awareness amongst all sections of society about the importance of working together towards making towns and cities a better place to live in.
- **Theme of the cleanliness survey 2023:** "Waste to Wealth", while for 2024 it is "Reduce, Reuse and Recycle".

### KEY FINDINGS OF SWACHH SURVEKSHAN AWARDS 2023

SWACHH SURVEKSHAN AWARDS 2023	
All India Clean City Rank 1	Indore & Surat
All India Clean City Rank 3	Navi Mumbai
All India Clean City Rank 1 (Population < 1 Lakh)	Sasvad
All India Clean City Rank 2 (Population < 1 Lakh)	Patan
All India Clean City Rank 3 (Population < 1 Lakh)	Lonavala
Cleanest Cantonment Board	Mhow Cantonment Board
Best Safai Mitra Surakshit Sneher	Chandigarh
Cleanest Ganga Town Rank 1	Varanasi
Cleanest Ganga Town Rank 2	Prayagraj

- **Cleanest city (over 10 lakh population):** Indore has been named the **cleanest city in the Swachh Survekshan Awards for the seventh consecutive year**.
  - Surat, which has been in second place, won the top award for the first time.
  - Both cities had 100% door-to-door collection of waste, 98% segregation at source and 100% remediation of dumpsites.
  - **Navi Mumbai** was named the third cleanest city.
- **Cleanest state:** Maharashtra was awarded the cleanest state, followed by Madhya Pradesh.
  - Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Rajasthan, Nagaland and Tripura were ranked the bottom five states.

### ABOUT SWACHH BHARAT MISSION (CLEAN INDIA MISSION)

- **Background:** It is a restructured version of the **Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan launched in 2009**.
- **Launched in:** 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2014
- **Type of scheme:** Centrally sponsored scheme
- **Objective:** To eliminate **open defecation and improve solid waste management and to create Open Defecation Free (ODF) villages**. Also aims to increase awareness of menstrual health management.
- **Phases of SBA:**
  - **Phase 1 of SBM:** Lasted till 2 October 2019. To eradicate manual scavenging, generating awareness and bringing about a behaviour change regarding sanitation practices, and augmentation of capacity at the local level.
  - **Phase 2 of SBM:** Being implemented between 2020–21 and 2024–25 to help cement the work of Phase 1. Aims to sustain the open defecation free status and improve the management of solid and liquid waste, while also working to improve the lives of sanitation workers.
- **The mission was split into two:** Rural and Urban.
  - **SBA - Rural:** Financed and monitored through the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation (since converted to the Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation under the Ministry of Jal Shakti).



- **SBA- Urban:** Overseen by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.

#### SALIENT FEATURES OF SWACHH BHARAT MISSION - URBAN 2.0

- **Launched in:** 2021
- **Tenure:** Till 2026.
- **Objective:** For creating a "Garbage Free" Urban India.
- **Focus areas of mission:** All households and premises segregate their **waste into "wet waste" and "dry waste"**.
  - **100% door to door collection of segregated waste** from each household/ premise;
  - **100% scientific management of all fractions of waste**, including safe disposal in scientific landfills;
  - **all legacy dumpsites remediated and converted into green zones;**
  - **all used water including fecal sludge**, especially in smaller cities are safely contained, transported, processed and disposed so that no untreated fecal sludge and used water pollutes the ground or water bodies.
- **Intervention of the mission:**
  - **Garbage Free Cities:** All statutory towns are certified at least 3-star garbage Free, or higher. Follows a **SMART framework – Single metric, Measurable, Achievable, Rigorous verification mechanism and Targeted towards outcomes.**
  - **ODF Norms:** No faeces should be seen around, and everyone at home and public places should use safe methods to get rid of it.
  - **ODF+ Norms:** Nobody should defecating and/or urinating in open areas. All public and community toilets should be kept clean and well-maintained.
  - **ODF++ Norms:** Emphasis on mechanized cleaning of septic tanks and sewers. Safe collection & treatment of used water as well as safe management of faecal sludge.
  - **Water+ Norms :** The focus is on collection, transportation, treatment, and reuse of both used water and faecal sludge to prevent environmental pollution.

(1) For towns having population more than 20,000, a minimum of 25% households to be connected to sewerage network.

(2) Striving to achieve sustainability.

(3) No untreated used water is let out in the environment.

## GLOBAL ALLIANCE FOR GLOBAL GOOD- GENDER EQUITY AND EQUALITY

#SOCIETY #SOCIAL JUSTICE #PRE-NUGGETS

PRIMARY SOURCE THE HINDU

*In a breakthrough, India has successfully set up a "Global Alliance for Global Good- Gender Equity and Equality" to push women's empowerment and gender equality during the 54th Annual Meeting of World Economic Forum in Davos.*

#### MORE INFORMATION

- **The aim** of the alliance is to bring together global good practices, knowledge sharing, investments in the field of women's health, education, and enterprise.
- The project is a follow up of the activities of the Engagement Group and initiatives drafted under the G20 framework, inter alia, the Business 20, Women 20 and G20 EMPOWER, among others.
- This initiative marks a significant stride toward achieving multiple SDGs, including SDG 3 – Good Health and Well-Being, 4- Quality Education, 5 – Gender Equality and Empowerment, 17- Global Partnership for Development and more, underscoring India's commitment to gender equality and equity as a critical component of global development.
- **This alliance is Supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation**, the alliance will be housed and anchored by the CII Centre for Women Leadership. The **World Economic Forum** has come on board as a **'Network Partner'** and **Invest India** as an **'Institutional Partner'**.
- Given India's abiding commitment to 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' – One Earth, One Family, One Future– and its continued efforts towards 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Prayaas', the 'Alliance for Global Good- Gender Equity

and Equality' is on the verge of being a force to reckon with on all gender-related issues of G20 nations.

## AROGYA MAITRI DISASTER MANAGEMENT CUBE - BHISHM

#SOCIAL JUSTICE #HEALTH #PRELIMS NUGGETS

PRIMARY SOURCE 

Two **Arogya Maitri Disaster Management Cube-BHISHM**, mobile hospitals have been deployed in Ayodhya to bolster medical readiness and response capabilities during the 'Pran Pratishtha' ceremony.



### ABOUT AROGYA MAITRI DISASTER MANAGEMENT CUBE - BHISHM

- It is the world's first portable hospital, this cube is a part of the broader initiative named "**Project BHISHM**" – **Bharat Health Initiative for Sahyog, Hita and Maitri** to develop a world-class disaster hospital.
- It is tailored to **treat up to 200 casualties**, emphasizing rapid response and comprehensive care.
- It integrates **Artificial Intelligence (AI) and data analytics** to facilitate effective coordination, real-time monitoring, and efficient management of medical services in the field.
- The Aid Cube is equipped with several innovative tools such as a mini-ICU, an operation theatre, cooking station, food, water, a power generator, blood test equipment, an X-ray machine, and more, designed to enhance disaster response and medical support during emergencies.

- The whole unit contains 72 easily transportable components that can be conveniently carried by hand, cycle, or even drone, providing unmatched flexibility.
- In the face of mass casualty incidents (MCIs), where requirements range from basic aid to advanced medical and surgical care, the Aid Cube stands out with its ability to be deployed **within 12 minutes**.
- These cubes are **robust, waterproof, and light**, designed for various configurations, making them ideal for diverse emergency scenarios. **From airdrops to ground transportation**, the cube can be rapidly deployed anywhere, ensuring immediate response capability.
- Two such 'Arogya Maitri' mother cubes combine to form a "brick" to complete the kit. The design of these cubes draws inspiration from the "**Rubik's Cube**."

## VAISHVIK BHARTIYA VAIGYANIK (VAIBHAV) FELLOWSHIPS PROGRAMME

#EDUCATION #PRELIMSNUGGETS

PRIMARY SOURCE 

Department of Science and Technology (DST) on Tuesday announced the first batch of Fellows of the Vaishvik Bhartiya Vaigyanik (VAIBHAV) scheme meant to attract Indian-origin scientists based abroad for short term collaboration.

### ABOUT VAISHVIK BHARTIYA VAIGYANIK (VAIBHAV)

- The Vaishvik Bhartiya Vaigyanik (VAIBHAV) fellowships programme is to be implemented by the Department of Science and Technology (DST).
- Ministry of Science and Technology would be award to outstanding scientists/technologists of Indian origin (NRI/OCI/PIO) who are engaged in research activities in their respective countries.
- The fellowship programme launched as a step to further those efforts by shaping and implementing the VAIBHAV programme, envisages collaboration between scientists of the Indian Diaspora with Indian Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs), Universities, and/ or public funded Scientific Institutions.

- The VAIBHAV Fellow would identify an Indian Institution for collaboration and may spend up to two months in a year for a maximum of 3 years.
- The fellowship would include a fellowship grant (INR 4,00,000 per month), international and domestic travel, accommodation and contingencies.
- The VAIBHAV fellows are expected to collaborate with their Indian counterparts and help initiate research activities in the host institution in the cutting-edge areas of Science and Technology.

## COALITION FOR EPIDEMIC PREPAREDNESS INNOVATIONS (CEPI)

#HEALTH #PRELIMS NUGGETS

PRIMARY SOURCE THE HINDU

*The Serum Institute of India (SII) will join a growing **Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI)** network of vaccine producers in the Global South to support more rapid, agile, and equitable responses to future disease outbreaks, and take it a step closer to achieving the 100 Days Mission.*

### ABOUT COALITION FOR EPIDEMIC PREPAREDNESS INNOVATIONS (CEPI)

- It is an innovative global partnership between **public, private, philanthropic, and civil society organisations** working to finance independent research projects to develop vaccines against emerging infectious diseases in alignment with the WHO R&D Blueprint for action to prevent epidemics.
- Enable equitable access to these vaccines for people during outbreaks.
- Also other biologic countermeasures against epidemic and pandemic threats.
- It was launched in **2017 at the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos** by the governments of Norway and India, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Wellcome Trust and WEF.
- **It adopted a vision of 100 Days Mission** for delivering a vaccine within 100 days with improved surveillance providing earlier detection and warning, and swift use

of interventions such as testing, contact tracing and social distancing to suppress disease transmission.

## JAL JEEVAN MISSION: HAR G HAR JAL

#PRELIMS NUGGETS #SCHEMES

PRIMARY SOURCE THE HINDU

*As of now, more than 14 crore rural households have tap connections, a significant increase from the 3.23 crore households reported in August 2019 **under the Jal Jeevan Mission.***

### ABOUT JAL JEEVAN MISSION

- **Launched in:** 2019
- **Type of scheme:** Centrally sponsored scheme.
- **Nodal ministry:** Ministry of Jal Shakti
- **Subsumed scheme:** National Rural Drinking Water Programme (NRDWP).
- **Aim:** To make provision of potable water at the service level of 55 litre per capita per day (lpcd) to every rural household through tap water connection, **by 2024.**
- **Core theme:** No one is left behind.
- **Implementation:** Drinking Water is a state subject, and hence, the responsibility of planning, approval, implementation, operation, and maintenance of drinking water supply schemes, lies with State/UT Governments.
- **Key features of the scheme:** Based on a community approach to water and will include extensive Information, education and communication.
  - Every rural household has drinking water supply in adequate quantity of prescribed quality on **regular and long-term basis at affordable service delivery charges** leading to improvement in living standards of rural communities.
  - Ensures the **functionality of existing water supply systems** and water connections, water quality monitoring and testing, as well as sustainable agriculture.
  - Combined **utilization of conserved water, augmentation of drinking water sources, improvement of drinking water supply systems, treatment of greywater, and its subsequent reuse.**

- **Creation of local infrastructure for mandatory source sustainability measures**, such as rainwater harvesting, groundwater recharge, and household wastewater management for reuse, is undertaken in convergence with other government programs and schemes.
- **The Paani Samitis plan** comprises 10-15 members, with at least 50% being women members, and includes individuals from Self-Help Groups, Accredited Social and Health Workers, Anganwadi teachers, etc., responsible **for implementing, managing, operating, and maintaining village water supply systems**.
- These committees prepare a one-time village action plan by consolidating all available village resources. The plan is approved in a Gram Sabha before implementation.
- **Intervention of the mission:**
  - **Nal Jal Mitra initiative:** Is a specialised programme which equips villagers with a comprehensive set of skills so that they are able to carry out minor repairs and maintenance of the piped water supply scheme in their village.
  - **Jal Jeevan Mission dashboard:** Gives real-time updates, progress reports, and so on, ensuring transparency and efficiency in water resource management and also ensures continuous monitoring and surveillance of water quality parameters through advanced technologies.
- **Significance:**
  - Providing safe water **can reduce infant deaths by almost 30%**, with the potential to prevent **25% of under-five deaths in India** (1,36,000 child deaths annually).
  - **4 lakh diarrhoeal deaths** can be averted if tap water is provided in every household.
  - It can lead to **economic savings of up to \$101 billion or ₹8.37 lakh crore**.
  - **Massive potential for employment generation** at the grassroot level.
  - **Helps in achieve the target of the** United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 6 (clean water and sanitation for all).
- **Performance of the scheme:**
  - In 61 districts affected by Japanese Encephalitis (JE) and Acute Encephalitis Syndrome (AES) across 5 states, tap water connections increased from 8 lakh (2.71%) to 2.09 crore (70.82%) households, has positively impacted the health profile of the rural population in these areas.
  - Safe drinking water has been made available in approximately 15,000 habitations affected by arsenic and about 8,000 habitations affected by fluoride.
  - The Mission has already **provided tap water to 73% of rural households**, means that more than 14 crore rural households have tap connections compared to only 3.23 crore in August 2019.

## PM YOUNG ACHIEVERS' SCHOLARSHIP AWARD SCHEME FOR A VIBRANT INDIA (PM YASASVI)

#EDUCATION #SCHEMES #PRELIMS NUGGETS

PRIMARY SOURCE pib

*Rs 32.44 Crore released for Pre-matric Scholarship and Rs 387.27 Crore released for Post-Matric Scholarship to States/UTs under **PM Young Achievers' Scholarship Award Scheme for a Vibrant India (PM YASASVI)**.*

### ABOUT PM YASASVI SCHEME

- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.
- **Type of scheme:** Centrally Sponsored Scheme
- **Beneficiaries:** To award scholarships to eligible candidates belonging to **Other Backward Class (OBC), Economically Backward Class (EBC), and De-Notified, Nomadic & Semi Nomadic Tribes(DNT/SNT) categories**.
- **Scholarships:** Ranging from Rs 75,000 to Rs 1,25,000.
- **Eligibility:** Income from all sources does not exceed Rs.2,50,000/- per annum. Students can avail Pre-Matric Scholarship from Class 9 to 10 and Post Matric Scholarship for their higher studies at post-matriculation or post-secondary stage.



- **Benefits:** Under this Scheme Students who excel in their studies also get an opportunity of Scholarship to study in **Top Class Schools and Colleges**. Hostel facilities are also provided to OBC students.
- **Selection Procedure:** Through a written test called YASASVI ENTRANCE TEST conducted by the **National Testing Agency**.

- **Components of the scheme:**

1. **Pre-Matric Scholarship:** For students studying in class IX and X on a full-time basis in Government Schools only. The students shall be given a consolidated academic allowance of Rs. 4000/- per annum.
2. **Post-Matric Scholarship:** Scholarship is awarded to students studying at post-matriculation or post-secondary stage to enable them to complete their education. Academic allowance from Rs.5000 to Rs.20000 is awarded to students as per category of course.
3. **Top Class School Education:** The scheme provides premium education to the meritorious students belonging to OBC, EBC and DNT categories by funding their education from Class 9 onwards till they complete Class 12. Scholarship is awarded for tuition fee, hostel fee and other charges as required by the school, subject to a maximum of Rs. 75,000/- per annum per student of class 9 and 10 and Rs. 1,25,000/- per annum per student of class 11 and 12.
4. **Top Class College Education:** To recognize and promote quality education amongst Students belonging to OBC, EBC and DNT categories by providing full financial support. Students, who secure admission in the notified institutions, will be awarded scholarship to meet the requirements for full tuition fee, living expenses to the beneficiary, books and stationery and a latest computer/laptop of reputed brand will be provided during the course.
5. **Construction of Hostel for OBC Boys and Girls:** To provide hostel facilities to students belonging to **socially and educationally backward classes, especially from rural areas to enable them to pursue secondary and higher education** in the Govt. schools, universities, institutions and institutes located at a reasonable distance to provide them greater access to high quality education.

## DAY-NRLM'S "SARATHI" APP

#WELFARE MECHANISM #SCHEMES #PRELIMS  
NUGGETS

PRIMARY SOURCE 

Recently, the government has launched the '**SARATHI**' App for Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Antyodaya Yojana- National Rural Livelihoods Mission (**DAY-NRLM**).

### ABOUT SARATHI APP

- Developed by the **Ministry of Rural Development** in partnership with The/Nudge Institute.
- It can play a multi-faceted role in ensuring timely, effective, and efficient implementation of the Graduation program targeting the most vulnerable.
- It will increase the effectiveness of work at multiple levels, reduce cognitive and administrative load, and ensure transparency.
- It also mitigates the risk of leakage of consumption and livelihood support being provided to the target households.

### ABOUT DAY-NRLM

- **Launched in:** 2011
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Rural Development
- **Type of scheme:** Centrally Sponsored scheme
- **Aim:** Reducing poverty by organizing impoverished rural households into Self-Help Groups (SHGs).
- **Restructured version:** Swarna Jayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojna (SGSY)
- **Key features of the scheme:**
  - **Social mobilisation and promotion and strengthening of self-managed** and financially sustainable community institutions of the rural poor women, at least one woman member from each identified rural poor household, is to be brought under the Self Help Group (SHG) network in a time bound manner.
  - It addresses **financial inclusion from the supply and the demand sides**, as the demand side, helps the underprivileged become more financially literate and gives the SHGs and their



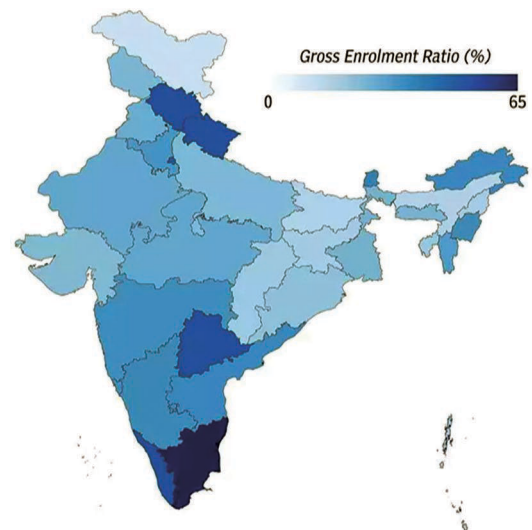
federations access to catalytic money and In terms of supply, promote the use of financial technologies based on information, communication, and technology (ICT).

- Beneficiaries identified by Participatory Identification of Poor (PIP) method instead of the BPL.
- Community Investment Funds (CIF) and Revolving Funds (RF) as resources in perpetuity to the institutions of the poor.
- Encourages public sector banks to set up Rural Self Employment Training Institutes (RSETIs) in all districts.
- **Initiative under this scheme:**
  - **Aajeevika Grameen Express Yojana (AGEY):** To provide safe, affordable and community monitored rural transport services to connect remote rural villages.
  - **Mahila Kisan Shashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP):** To promote agro-ecological practices that increase women farmers income and reduce their input costs and risks.
  - **Start-Up Village Entrepreneurship Programme (SVEP):** To support entrepreneurs in rural areas to set up local enterprises.
  - **Deendayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDUGKY):** Enhancing the youth's placement-related talents and placing them in economic sectors with comparatively better wages.

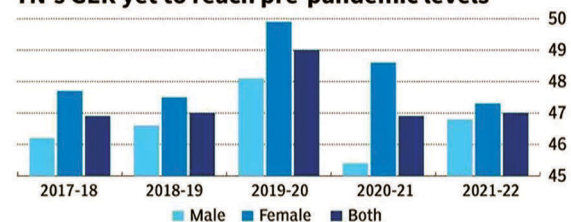
- **National Average of GER:** In higher education (18-23 years) increased to 28.4%, from 27.3% in 2020-21 and 23.7% in 2014-15, the base year.
- **Among India's states:** Chandigarh has the highest GER of 64.8 % followed by Puducherry with 61.5 per cent and Delhi with 49 per cent.
  - **Tamil Nadu** consistently maintains the highest GER (47%) for five academic years between 2017-18 and 2021-22.
- **Female's GER:** Risen to 28.5% (2.07 crore) in 2021-22 from 27.9% (2.01 crore) in 2020-21 and 22.9% in 2014-15.
  - The most significant growth was observed at the PhD level, with 98,636 women enrolled in 2021-22, compared to only 47,717 eight years ago.
  - Among the additional 91 lakh students who joined higher education in 2021-22 compared to 2014-15, 55% were women. The postgraduate level saw the highest proportion of female students, accounting for 55.4%.

### In a class of its own

**TN has the highest Gross Enrolment Ratio among States in higher education (2021-22)**



### TN's GER yet to reach pre-pandemic levels



Source: AISHE 2021-22

## ALL INDIA SURVEY ON HIGHER EDUCATION (AISHE)

#EDUCATION #PRELIMS NUGGETS

PRIMARY SOURCE BusinessLine

Recently the Ministry of Education, released the **All-India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) of 2021-22**.

### KEY FINDINGS OF AISHE 2021-22

#### 1. Gross enrolment ratio (GER)

- **Enrolment Schedule Caste (SC) and Schedule Tribe (ST) students:** Approximate 2% increase in GER. In 2021-22, the GER for SC students rose to 27.2%, and for ST students, it increased to 25.8%, compared to 25.6% and 23.4% respectively in 2020-21.

- **Enrolment of Other Backward Class (OBC) students:** Has seen growth, reaching 1.63 crore in 2021-22 from 1.13 crore in 2014-15.

## 2. Courses:

- **Undergraduate level courses:** Account for 78.9% of total enrolment, while postgraduate level courses constitute 12.1%.

- In the undergraduate level, Arts has the highest enrolment at 34.2%, followed by Science (14.8%), Commerce (13.3%), and Engineering and Technology (11.8%).

- **At the postgraduate level:** Social Science has the highest enrolment at 21.1%, followed by Science (14.7%).

- **In the PhD category:** Social sciences rank third after engineering and science. While 52,748 students pursue a PhD in engineering and 45,324 in science, 26,057 opt for PhD in social sciences.

## 3. STEM Enrolment:

- Around 98.5 lakh students are pursuing STEM degrees in UG, PG and Ph.D. levels registering an increase over previous years.

## 4. Institutions:

- Government Universities, comprising 58.6% of total universities, contribute to 73.7% of total enrolment, while Private Universities account for 26.3%.

- The survey reports a total of 1,168 Universities/University-level institutions, 45,473 Colleges, and 12,002 Standalone Institutions.

## 5. Faculty:

- The total number of faculty/teachers in 2021-22 is 15.98 lakh, with approximately 56.6% being male and 43.4% female.

### ABOUT ALL INDIA SURVEY ON HIGHER EDUCATION (AISHE)

- Published by Ministry of Education since 2011 to portray the status of higher education in the country.
- According to this survey, higher education is defined as education, that is obtained after completing 12 years of schooling or equivalent.
- **Several parameters are used for collection of data** such as teachers, student enrolment, programmes, examination results, education finance, and infrastructure.
- **Indicators of educational development** such as Institution Density, Gross Enrolment Ratio, Pupil-teacher ratio, Gender Parity Index, Per Student Expenditure will also be calculated from the data collected through AISHE.

# PRACTICE QUESTIONS

## MCQS

**Q1. With respect to "VAIBHAV fellowship", consider the following statements:**

1. It offers NRI researchers an opportunity to work for six months a year with a research institution or an academic institution in India.
2. It is implemented by the Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education.
3. The duration of the fellowship is five years.

How many of the above statements are correct?

- |               |              |
|---------------|--------------|
| (a) Only one  | (b) Only two |
| (c) All three | (d) None     |

**Q2. With reference to the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), consider the following statements:**

1. It was launched at World Economic Forum (WEF) summit in 2017.
2. The goal of CEPI is to create equal access to new and underused vaccines for children living in the world's poorest countries.
3. It adopted a vision of 100 Days Mission for delivering a vaccine within 100 days.

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**SOCIETY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE**

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How many of the above statements is/are correct?

- (a) Only one                      (b) Only two  
(c) All three                      (d) None

**Q3. With reference to the Jal Jeevan Mission, consider the following statements:**

1. It is the flagship scheme of the Ministry of Rural Development.
2. The vision is to provide safe drinking water through individual tap connections to all rural households in India by 2030.
3. Every rural household has access to an adequate and free supply of drinking water.

How many of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) Only one                      (b) Only two  
(c) All three                      (d) None

**Q4. With reference to the Swachh Survekshan Awards 2023, consider the following statements:**

1. It is launched by the Ministry of Jal Shakti.
2. Indore has been named the cleanest city in the Swachh Survekshan Awards for the seventh consecutive year.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only                      (b) 2 only  
(c) Both 1 and 2                      (d) Neither 1 nor 2

**Q5. With reference to the All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE), consider the following statements:**

1. It is published by the Ministry of Education since 2011.
2. The national average of Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education has increased from the previous year.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only                      (b) 2 only  
(c) Both 1 and 2                      (d) Neither 1 nor 2

## DESCRIPTIVE QUESTIONS

- Q1.** What are some of the challenges faced by Anganwadi services according to NITI Aayog, and how do these challenges affect the effectiveness of the program?
- Q2.** What are the key factors contributing to the prevalence of child marriage in India, and what measures are being taken by the government and other stakeholders to address this issue?

**Answers:** 1-d, 2-b, 3-d, 4-b, 5-c

# GEOGRAPHY, ENVIRONMENT, BIODIVERSITY & DISASTER MANAGEMENT

# GS PAPER (PRELIMS) AND GS PAPER I & III (MAIN)

## IIT-DELHI TEAM MAKES FIRST HIRES LANDSLIDE RISK MAP FOR INDIA

#DISASTERMANAGEMENT #LANDSLIDES

#MAINSEXHASUTIVE

PRIMARY  
SOURCE

THE HINDU

SECONDARY  
SOURCE

NDMA

*IIT-Delhi team makes first hi-res landslide risk map for India. The 'Indian Landslide Susceptibility Map' is the first of its kind by virtue of being on a national scale, leaving out no locations in the country.*

### WHAT ARE LANDSLIDE SUSCEPTIBILITY MAPS?

- A map that ranks slope stability of an area. It shows locations where landslides may occur in future (without a definite time frame). These maps go beyond an inventory map and depict areas that have the potential for land sliding.

#### Landslide Inventory

- Documentation of all the known landslide incidences including stabilised, dormant, reactivated, and most recent slides.

#### Landslide Risk Map

- A map that integrates landslide hazard, landslide vulnerability and quantification of elements at risk.

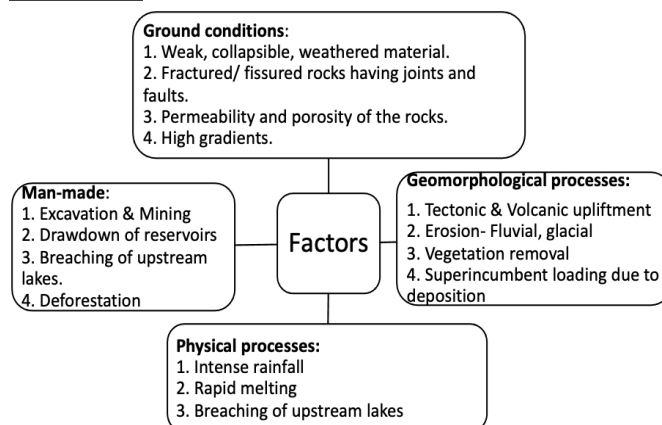
#### Landslide Hazard Map

- Map of spatial and temporal extent of landslide hazard. It indicates those areas that are, or could be, affected by landslides, assessing the probability of such landslides occurring within a specific period of time.

### WHAT MAKES LANDSLIDE A UNIQUE DISASTER?

- They are very localised phenomenon and hence harder to track and study with satellites.
- Lack of data further does not allow the machine learning models to get developed.

### FACTORS WHICH MAKE AREA SUSCEPTIBLE TO LANDSLIDE



As per Geological Survey of India, about 0.42 million sq.km covering nearly 12.6% of land area of India is prone to landslide. Major landslide prone areas in India:

- Western Ghats and Konkan Hills (Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Goa and Maharashtra)

- Eastern Ghats (Araku region in Andhra Pradesh)
- North-East Himalayas (Darjeeling and Sikkim)
- Northwest Himalayas (Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, J&K).

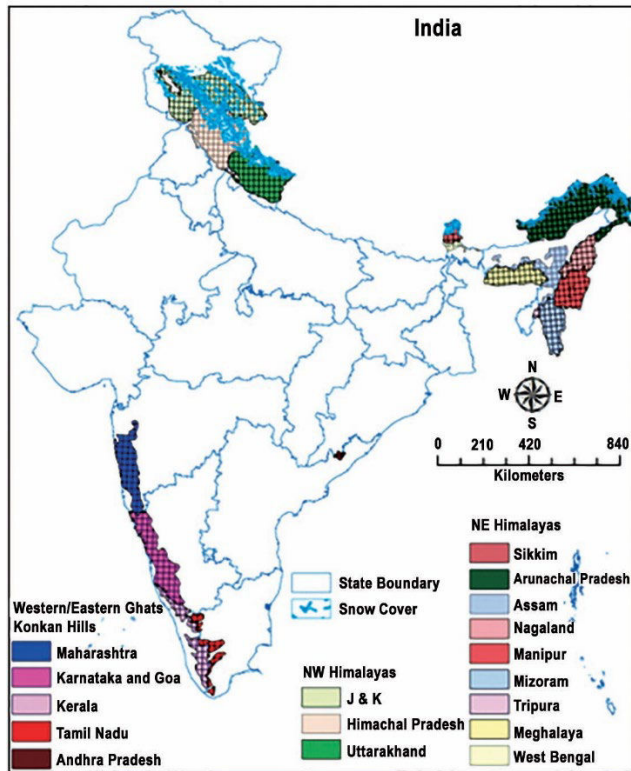


Figure: Major landslide prone areas of India (0.42 Million km<sup>2</sup>)

### NDMA NATIONAL LANDSLIDE RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

- **Generation of User-Friendly Landslide Hazard Maps** taking local factors into account and integrating it with the risk mitigation plans.
- **Development of Landslide Monitoring and Early Warning System** focussing on multi-hazard EWS as landslide are known to have cascading impacts on the downstream areas. For e.g. a landslide in an area can lead to floods, erosion, deforestation etc.
- **Awareness Programmes** for the local community regarding steps which they should take or avoid during such disasters.
- **Capacity Building and Training of Stakeholders** so as to launch an immediate response as and when the calamity hits.
- **Structural measures** including modifying slope geometry, using chemical agents to reinforce slope material, installing structures such as piles and retaining walls, grouting rock joints and fissures, diverting debris

pathways, and rerouting surface and underwater drainage.

- **Preparation of Mountain Zone Regulations & Policies**

## CARBON BORDER ADJUSTMENT MECHANISM

#CLIMATECHANGE #MAINSEXHAUSTIVE

PRIMARY SOURCE THE HINDU

A concerning development for India is the European Union (EU)'s Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM). The policy, which intends to tax carbon-intensive products coming into the EU from 2026, is divided into two phases, with the first phase (transitional phase) kicking in from October 1, 2023.

### WHAT IS A CARBON BORDER ADJUSTMENT TAX?

- A carbon border adjustment tax is a duty on imports based on the amount of carbon emissions resulting from the production of the product in question.
- It is aimed putting a fair price on the carbon emitted during the production of carbon intensive goods that are entering the EU, and to encourage cleaner industrial production in non-EU countries.
- The gradual introduction of the CBAM is aligned with the phase-out of the allocation of free allowances under the EU Emissions Trading System (ETS) to support the decarbonisation of EU industry.

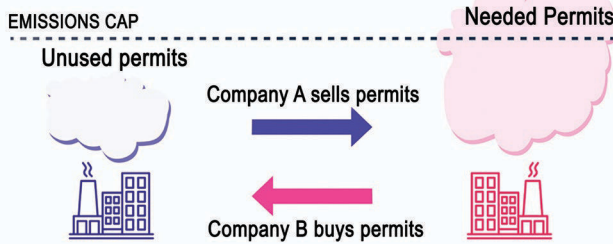
### EU EMISSIONS TRADING SYSTEM

- The EU ETS works on the 'cap and trade' principle. A cap is a limit set on the total amount of greenhouse gases that can be emitted by the installations and aircraft operators covered by the system. The cap is reduced annually in line with the EU's climate target, ensuring that emissions decrease overtime.
- Within the cap, companies primarily buy allowances on the EU carbon market, but they also receive some allowances for free. Companies can also trade allowances with each other as needed. If an installation or operator reduce their emissions, they can either keep the spare allowances to use in the future or sell them.
- Hence it makes polluters pay for their greenhouse gas emissions, helps bring emissions down and generates



revenues to finance the EU's green transition, operates in all EU countries plus Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway (EEA-EFTA states).

#### The EU Emissions Trading System: Cap & trade mechanism



**Note:** This EU-ETS works for the companies located within the EU borders. CBAM is for those companies which are located outside the E.U.

#### HOW THE CBAM WILL WORK?

- The CBAM puts an emissions tariff on imports of goods with a high risk of carbon leakage from countries which are not members of the EU Emissions Trading System (ETS).
- Companies importing goods into the EU will have to purchase CBAM certificates and then surrender the required amount to cover the corresponding emissions each year.
- There are no limits on the number of CBAM certificates an importer may purchase so as to avoid imposing restrictions on trade.
- Unlike ETS allowances, CBAM certificates are not tradeable nor bankable.

EU importers of goods covered by the CBAM register with national authorities where they can also buy **CBAM certificates**. Certificates are priced based on **weekly ETS allowances**.



EU importer **declares the emissions** embedded in it imports and **surrenders** the corresponding number of certificates each year.



If importers can prove that a **carbon price has already been paid** during the production of the imported goods, the corresponding amount **can be deducted**.



#### MERITS OF CBAM (VIEWPOINT OF E.U)

- **Preventing Carbon leakage:** It refers to a phenomenon where a EU manufacturer moves carbon intensive production to countries outside the region with less stringent climate policies and hence it does not reduce the actual carbon emissions, it just shifts the

source to other regions. CBAM will try to bring stringency for those industries also.

- **Protecting Domestic industries:** CBAM will charge the carbon intensive products coming from non-EU countries hence it will ensure level playing field to the domestic companies who by virtue of EU-ETS are already following stringent norms.
- **In line with E.U's green targets:** According to the European Commission's proposal, CBAM would contribute to the achievement of climate neutrality by 2050. This will also help them to reduce GHG emissions by 55% by 2030. It comes under the EU's Green Deal too.

#### ISSUE WITH CBAM (VIEWPOINTS OF INDIA, CHINA & OTHER DEVELOPING COUNTRIES)

- **Hurting industrial interests:** This might hurt Industrial interests in the developing countries as their exports will be charged by EU. For e.g. In FY22, India exported Steel and aluminium related products to E.U to the tune of \$10B.
- **Violative of CBDR:** As CBAM is equally applicable to all the countries outside EU, it violates the principle of 'Common but differentiated responsibilities' as was agreed under Paris agreement.
- **Green protectionism:** This can be misused by EU to unnecessarily levy the import duties on imports. Experts have said that CBAM charge can be around 20-35% but the average levy of EU on the companies within EU is around 2-3%.
- **Valuation of carbon embedded:** There are huge differences between how the actual carbon content embedded is calculated and valued in other jurisdictions.
- **Historical contribution by developing world in climate change** is also very low therefore they cannot be charged for their developmental activities.
- **FTA agreement and zero duties:** It is still not clear that whether CBAM will be applicable in the FTA or not. For e.g. If India enters into FTA with EU, then there are chances that EU will impose CBAM making Indian products costly. But India might not reciprocate it

leading to zero duties and flooding of Indian markets by EU products.

- **Other factors for Industrial location:** Just the stringent environmental norms do not govern the shift of industries from EU to Asia & Africa. There are other factors also like cheap labour, availability of land, huge markets, government policies etc. So the E.U's argument that Industries shift to other areas just to avoid stringent policies is not completely acceptable.
- **Compliance with WTO:** Developing countries have also criticised this legislation on account of violative of WTO's special and differential treatment provisions.

#### WHAT CAN BE DONE?

- **Funds to developing countries:** Experts have suggested that EU could collect the tax and return the funds to such countries to invest in their green technologies.
- **Own legislations:** India can also come up with their own legislations in this regard.

#### WHAT IS CARBON INTENSIVE?

- Carbon intensity is a measure of how clean our production is. For e.g. in case of electricity, it refers to how many grams of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) are released to produce a kilowatt hour (kWh) of electricity.
- Electricity that's generated using fossil fuels is more carbon intensive, as the process by which it's generated creates CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.
- Renewable energy sources, such as wind, hydro or solar power, produce less CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, so their carbon intensity value is much lower.

## USING MOSQUITOFISH TO FIGHT MOSQUITOES THROWS INDIA A TOUGHER PUZZLE

#ECOLOGY #PRELIMSNUGGETS

PRIMARY  
SOURCE

THE HINDU

SECONDARY  
SOURCE

MONGABAY

*In the last few months, various government and non-governmental organisations in Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, and Punjab have released mosquitofish into local water bodies to address a mosquito menace that locals have complained about.*

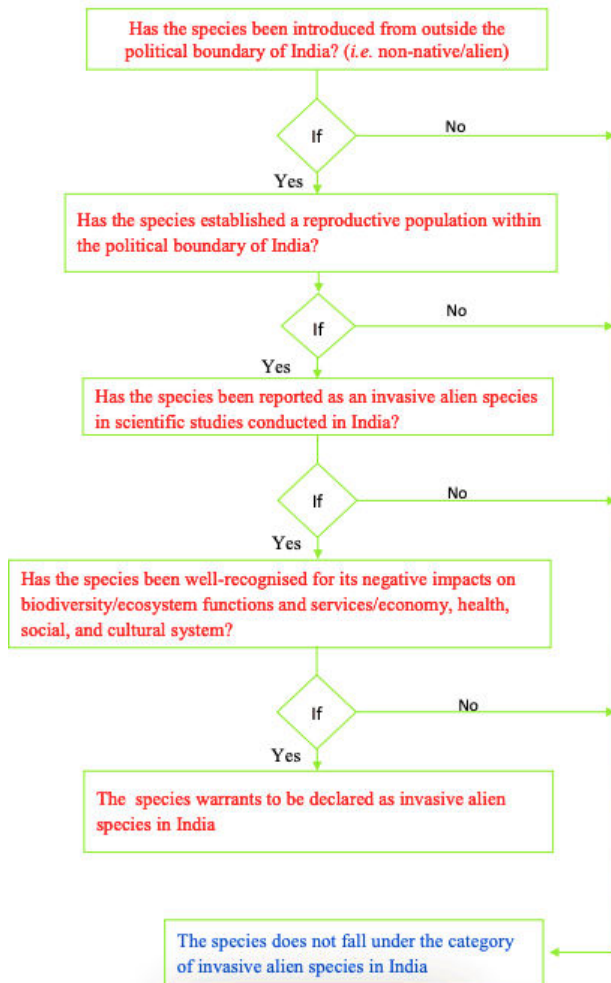
#### ABOUT THE NEWS

- In the 1960s, such approaches – including introducing mosquitofish in freshwater ecosystems to feed on mosquito larvae – became prominent as alternatives to chemical solutions like pesticides.
- Among mosquito predators were two species of mosquitofish, *Gambusia affinis* and *Gambusia holbrooki*.
- Aside from their resilience, these fish also have voracious feeding habits and have demonstrated aggressive behaviour in habitats to which they are introduced.
- In 2018, the National Biodiversity Authority of the Government of India also designated *G. affinis* and *G. holbrooki* as invasive alien species. But both government and non-governmental organisations in India have continued to introduce these species for mosquito-control.

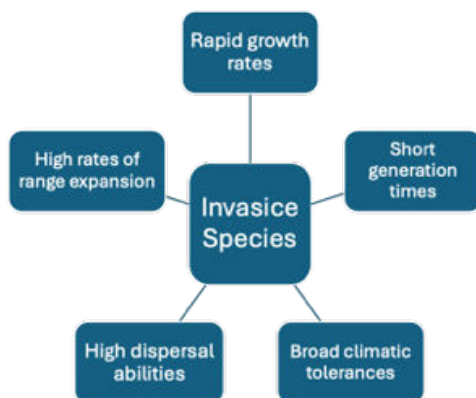
#### INVASIVE SPECIES IN INDIA

- Invasive species are emerging as a severe threat, especially to natural and agricultural landscapes.
- Invasive species can harm both the natural resources in an ecosystem as well as threaten human use of these resources. An invasive species can be introduced to a new area via the ballast water of oceangoing ships, intentional and accidental releases of aquaculture species, aquarium specimens or bait, and other means.
- India is known to have more than 200 invasive species. Some of India's most notorious invasives include lantana, parthenium, Siam weed, Mexican devil (*Ageratina adenophora*) and mesquite (*Prosopis juliflora*). The water hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*) has invaded many inland water bodies, while alligator weed (*Alternanthera philoxeroides*) invades both aquatic and terrestrial habitats in India. *C. riisei* is the invasive coral which attaches itself to various surfaces in the sea, usurping space and vital nutrients from other marine species, including corals, sponges, algae etc.

- Criteria followed by National Biodiversity Authority to identify whether the species is invasive or not-



**CHARACTERISTICS/REASONS FOR THEIR DOMINANCE**



**IMPACTS**

Invasive species threaten biodiversity and ecosystem processes, with direct and indirect impacts on human wellbeing. They suppress native biodiversity and cause local extinctions. They alter wildlife habitat. They affect

livelihoods directly by suppressing species that people depend on (e.g., non-timber forest products, 'NTFP') and by encroaching on private and commonly held agricultural and grazing land. They affect livelihoods and wellbeing indirectly by altering hydrology, damaging soils, affecting the provisioning of ecosystem services, and due to costs incurred in their control or management. Further they can also lead to various disasters for eg, Lantana is changing the fire patterns in Himalayan forests making new areas vulnerable to wildfires and deforestation subsequently leading to soil erosion, landslides etc.

## DENSE FOG OVER NORTH-WEST INDIA AS FRESH WESTERN DISTURBANCE ROLLS IN OVER AFGHANISTAN

#GEOGRAPHY #PRELIMSNUGGETS

#MAINSEXHAUSTIVE

PRIMARY  
SOURCE

BusinessLine

SECONDARY  
SOURCE

INDIA METEOROLOGICAL  
DEPARTMENT

Night temperatures are below normal over East India but have looked up over the rest of the country to the West (North-West India) as a causative western disturbance pulled in farther away beyond the border and locked in over North-East Afghanistan.

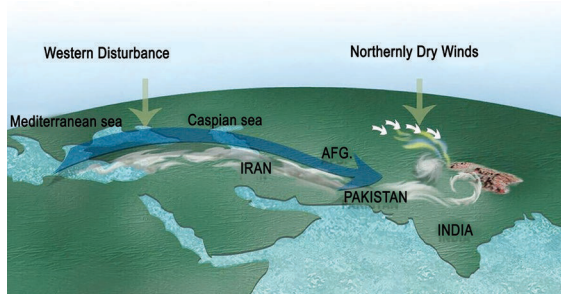
**WHAT ARE WESTERN DISTURBANCES?**

- These are the extra-tropical cyclones.
- They originate in the Mediterranean region and travel eastward to northern Bangladesh, south-eastern Nepal and Northern India.
- The sub-tropical westerly jet streams help western disturbances to enter the Indian sub-continent and affect its weather.
- The winds while moving also takes up the moisture from the Mediterranean Sea, Black Sea and Caspian Sea
- These moisture laden western disturbances eventually come up against the Himalayas and get blocked, therefore, the moisture gets trapped, and precipitation is shared.
- On an average 4-6 disturbances (temperate cyclones) per month pass over northern India between November to April.



## GEOGRAPHY, ENVIRONMENT, BIODIVERSITY & DISASTER MANAGEMENT

- It is a non-monsoonal precipitation pattern that induces low pressure systems in the lower layers of the atmosphere.



- This, ultimately, causes rainfall in the plains and snowfall in the mountains.
- These disturbances result into snow fall in western Himalaya and rainfall in the Great Plains and provide moisture to Rabi season crops.

### RECENT CHANGES IN THE BEHAVIOUR OF WESTERN DISTURBANCES

- For at least three years now, western disturbances have displayed unusual behaviour in India.
- The precipitation has reduced and winters have remained largely dry across India.

In the winter of 2022-23, India recorded just three intense Western Disturbances, against the average of 4-6 intense events each month.

#### DECEMBER

saw only one weak Western Disturbance. Consequently, it was the hottest December on record. Northwest India received only 17 per cent of its normal rainfall

#### JANUARY

received five Western Disturbances, but only two of them were intense. The month received moderate to heavy snowfall, leading to a winter chill across northwest India

#### FEBRUARY

saw four weak Western Disturbances. The year recorded the hottest February since 1901 and was sixth driest on record

#### MARCH

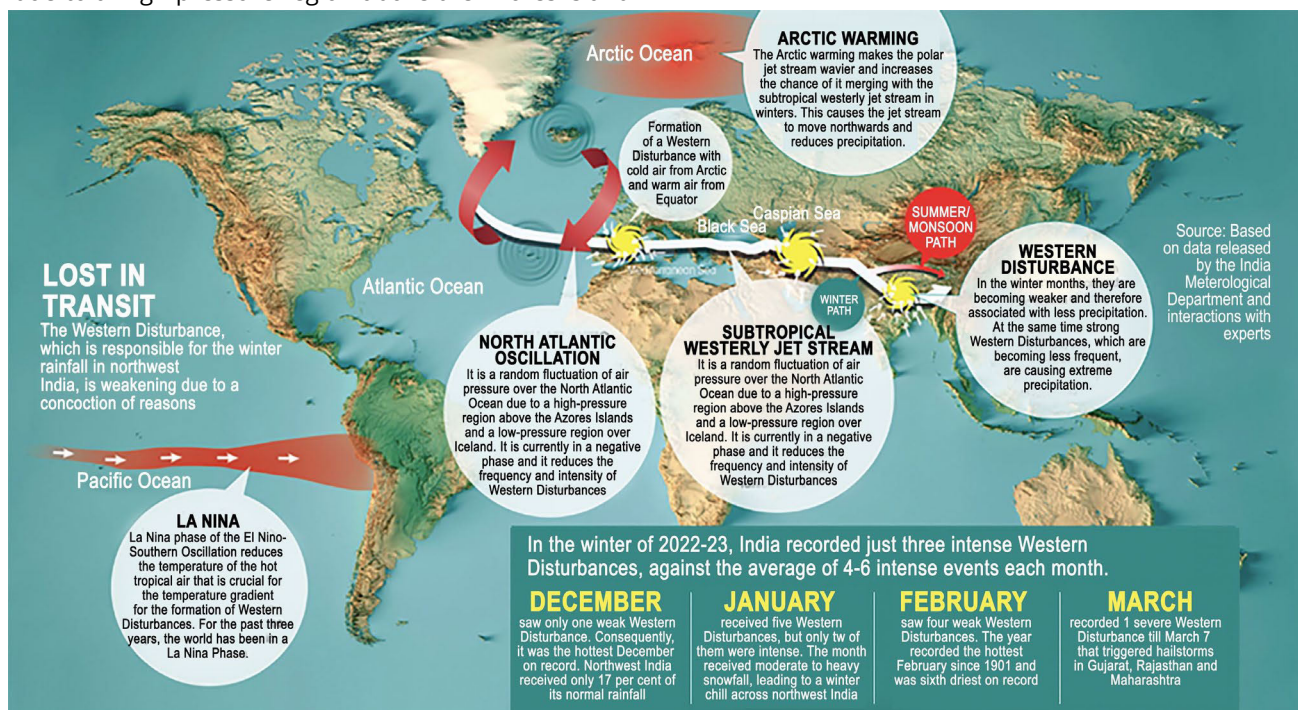
recorded 1 severe Western Disturbance till March 7 that triggered hailstorms in Gujarat, Rajasthan and Maharashtra

### CAUSES

- Arctic warming** makes the Polar Jetstream wavier and increases the chance of merging with Sub tropical westerly Jetstream in winters. This causes the Jetstream to shift Northwards and reduce precipitation.
- North Atlantic oscillation** which is a random fluctuation of air pressure over the North Atlantic Ocean due to a High pressure region above the Azores island

and low pressure region over Iceland. It is currently in a negative phase and it reduces the frequency and intensity of the Western Disturbances.

- La-Nina** phases in the previous years reduced the temperature of hot tropical air that is crucial for the temperature gradient for the formation of the Western Disturbances.



**IMPACTS OF THIS CHANGE**

- **Alteration in temperature and precipitation** patterns across India.
- The lack of snowfall in the mountains affects the yield of **Rabi crops** in some regions.
- Rivers also get less water and hence affect the **availability of the freshwater resources**.
- **Farm income** is greatly impacted due to the disastrous impacts on Apple production.
- **Air quality:** The associated winds and precipitation can help in dispersing pollutants, leading to temporary improvements in air quality, especially in urban areas. Fluctuations in western disturbance can thus effect the air quality.
- **Disaster frequency increases** as reduction in W.D intensity can lead to droughts and increase in intensity creates floods.

## LARGEST DEEP-SEA CORAL REEF

#PRELIMSNUGGETS #INDIAN GEOGRAPHY

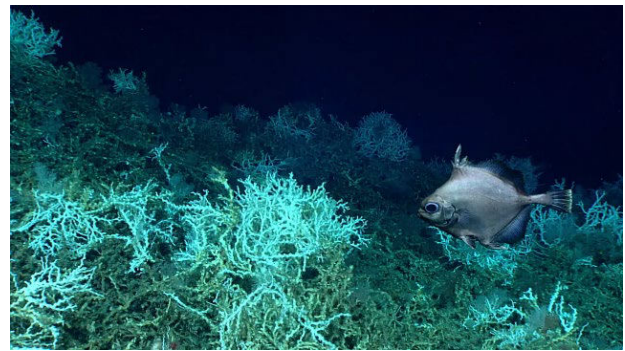
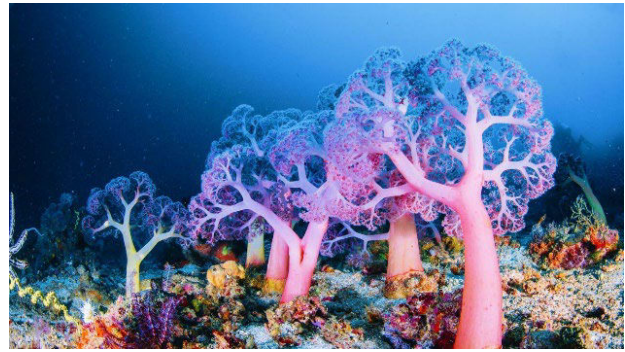
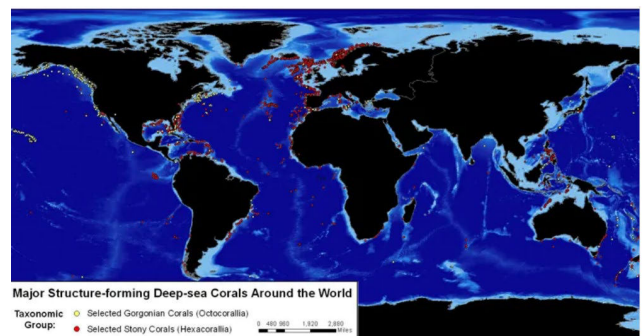
PRIMARY SOURCE The Indian EXPRESS

Scientists map the largest deep sea coral reef found till date in Atlantic off US.

**DEEP SEA CORAL**

- Deep-sea corals are defined as corals **that live at depths greater than 50 meters, but most species live in depths several hundred meters deep, in cold, dark, rocky habitats, often far from shore.**
- Deep-sea corals live beyond the zone where sunlight penetrates, which is called the **euphotic (light-filled) zone**.
- Coral frameworks contain many sub-habitats occupied by other species of marine animal.
- In deep-sea corals, the **polyps don't have to struggle for space**. So, they end up larger than surface polyps, even though the overall number of polyps and polyp colonies is smaller in deep-sea corals.
- Deep-sea corals are **sessile**, which means they remain in one place. They cannot walk or swim.
- To date, however, **more than 3,300 species of deep-sea corals have been identified**.

- They obtain the energy and nutrients for their survival by trapping tiny organisms in passing currents and

**DISTRIBUTION**

- Unlike shallow-water coral reefs, which are limited to warm tropical waters, deep-sea corals are found throughout the world's oceans, from tropical to polar regions.

**FORMATION**

Deep-water coral formation involves a gradual process, often centered around species like *Lophelia pertusa*. The steps in the formation of deep corals are as follows:

- **Larval Settlement:** The process begins with coral larvae settling on hard substrates in deep-sea environments. These hard surfaces may include rocks or other underwater structures.
- **Colony Formation:** Under suitable conditions, a coral larva will develop into a colony. This colony is the



starting point for the growth of the deep-water coral structure.

- **Bioerosion:** As the colony grows, parts of the coral skeleton may be attacked by boring organisms such as sponges and worms. This bioerosion process can cause pieces of the initial colony to break off.
- **Daughter Colony Formation:** The broken pieces, still alive, can give rise to daughter colonies around the initial colony. This process contributes to the growth and expansion of the coral structure.
- **Structural Growth:** The entire structure takes on a distinctive form, often described as hemispherical or "cauliflower" shaped. This growth continues as daughter colonies develop and expand.
- **Water Circulation Blockage:** Over time, daughter colonies may grow large enough to impede water circulation to the center of the coral framework. This leads to the death of the central part of the structure.
- **Ring-Shaped Colony Formation:** The death of the central part results in the formation of a characteristic ring-shaped colony, often referred to as a "Wilson Ring."
- **Accumulation of Sediment:** Amongst the dead, eroded, and broken coral fragments, sediment begins to accumulate. This sediment originates from the action of bioeroding organisms breaking up the coral and from particulate matter falling out of the water as it is slowed down by the coral framework.
- **Reef Maturation:** Over time, these structures coalesce, forming mature deep-water coral reefs. These reefs typically have a living coral layer overlying a framework of dead coral mixed with sediments.

The specific characteristics of deep-water coral reefs can vary, including shapes like haystack-shaped mounds, conical-shaped reefs, and barrier-like structures. The growth rates of deep-water corals are relatively slow, and the thickness of the framework can provide insights into the age of these reefs, which may extend over thousands or even tens of thousands of years.

#### **ADAPTATION**

Deep-sea corals have evolved various adaptations to thrive in the unique and challenging conditions of the deep ocean. Here are some key adaptations:

- **Low Light Tolerance:** Deep-sea corals are adapted to low-light conditions prevalent in the deep ocean. They often possess symbiotic relationships with

photosynthetic organisms, like algae or bacteria, which can provide them with a supplementary energy source through photosynthesis.

- **Slow Growth Rates:** Deep-sea corals typically exhibit slow growth rates compared to their shallow-water counterparts. This adaptation allows them to make the most of limited nutrient availability in deep-sea environments.
- **Filter-Feeding Mechanisms:** Some deep-sea corals are adapted to capture food particles from the water through filter-feeding. They have specialized structures, such as tentacles or polyps, designed to capture small organisms drifting in the currents.
- **Temperature Stability:** Deep-sea corals are adapted to the relatively stable, cold temperatures of the deep ocean. They are well-suited to the consistent and lower temperatures found in these environments.
- **Pressure Resistance:** Deep-sea corals must withstand high hydrostatic pressure in the deep ocean. Their tissues and skeletal structures are adapted to resist this pressure, allowing them to survive at great depths.
- **Calcium Carbonate Skeletons:** Like shallow-water corals, many deep-sea corals build skeletons made of calcium carbonate. These skeletons provide structural support for the coral colonies and contribute to the formation of deep-sea coral reefs.
- **Longevity:** Deep-sea corals can live for centuries, and some species are known for their exceptional longevity. This longevity may be an adaptation to the slow growth rates and the stability of deep-sea environments.
- **Flexibility in Diet:** Some deep-sea corals exhibit a degree of dietary flexibility. While they may capture small organisms through filter-feeding, they can also adapt to other available food sources, such as marine snow (organic particles sinking from surface waters).
- **Reproductive Strategies:** Deep-sea corals have developed various reproductive strategies. They may reproduce sexually through the release of gametes into the water, and some species can also reproduce asexually by producing clones or buds.

These adaptations collectively enable deep-sea corals to thrive in environments characterized by darkness, low temperatures, high pressure, and limited nutrient availability. Their unique features contribute to the biodiversity and ecological significance of deep-sea ecosystems.

# AMMONIA POLLUTION IN YAMUNA RIVER

#ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

PRIMARY SOURCE The Indian EXPRESS

Water treatment plant is struggling to keep pace with rising ammonia level in Yamuna River.

## AMMONIA POLLUTION

Ammonia pollution is pollution by the chemical ammonia (NH<sub>3</sub>) – a compound of nitrogen and hydrogen which is a byproduct of agriculture and industry.

## SOURCES

- Agriculture-related emissions of ammonia include biomass burning or fertilizer manufacture, manures, slurries, and fertiliser application.
- Non-agricultural sources, such as catalytic converters in petrol cars, landfill sites, sewage works, composting of organic materials, combustion, industry and wild mammals and birds.

## PERMISSIBLE LIMITS

Ammonia (as total ammonia N), mg/l, Max

IS 10500: 2012	Acceptable limit: 0.5 mg/l Permissible limit: No relaxation
Risks or effects	None proposed for human, but toxic for aquatic life
Sources	Disinfection with chloramines, wastes, fertilisers and natural processes
Treatment	Ion Exchange with zeolite Sodium alumina silicate zeolites Distillation

## IMPACT OF AMMONIA POLLUTION

- **Biodiversity:** Aqueous ammonia may seep directly into the ground or flow into aquatic ecosystems. Both terrestrial and aquatic ammonia pollution decrease biodiversity mainly through the process of **nitrification**.
- **Terrestrial Effects:** In terrestrial settings, **ammonia increases soil acidity** (decreased pH) and **causes eutrophication** (an overabundance of nutrients). Both

occur as a direct result of nitrification. In this process, **ammonia is converted into nitrate by bacteria** (usually of **genera Nitrosomonas and Nitrobacter**).

- **Aquatic effects:** In aquatic settings, ammonia causes nitrogenous oxygen demand, eutrophication, and changes in fish health.
- **Nitrogenous biological oxygen demand (NBOD)** occurs as a direct result of nitrification. Dissolved oxygen (O<sub>2</sub>) is used in nitrification to react with NH<sub>3</sub>. This results in less O<sub>2</sub> being available to organisms that depend on it.
- **Nitrification also releases nitrate** which leads to **eutrophication** as in terrestrial settings.
- **Nitrophilous algae and macrophytes create large blooms** in standing water. This puts stress on resources and can indirectly poison organisms through toxic algae formation.
- In contrast, **ammonia can also directly harm** organisms with permeable skin if they absorb it. Fish kills and changes in fish growth, gill condition, organ weights, and hematocrit (red blood cell) levels are linked to ammonia exposure.

**Human Health:** Ammonium (NH<sub>4</sub>) aerosols are classified as fine particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub> or particulate matter less than 2.5 microns in size).

- The small size of PM<sub>2.5</sub> particles allows them to enter the lungs and bloodstream through inhalation.
- Ammonium particles can then cause complications **including asthma, lung cancer, cardiovascular issues, birth defects, and premature death in humans**.

## MEASURES TAKEN BY GOVERNMENT TO CURB AMMONIA POLLUTION

The initiatives taken by the Government to control the environmental pollution due to nitrogenous chemical compounds inter-alia include:

- **Categorization of fertilizer industry under 17 categories of highly polluting industries.**
- **Stringent norms** stipulated for Nitrogenous compounds in **emission/effluent discharge from fertilizer industry**.
- **Installation of online (24x7) monitoring devices** and adoption of water conservation practices by fertilizer industry.
- Directions from CPCB to SPCBs for **setting up of sewerage system for sewage collection, treatment**

and disposal by local/ urban bodies and also to meet the standards as laid down for its use for non-potable purpose.

- Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) also inter-alia recommended soil test based **integrated nutrient management practices** through:
  - Conjunctive use of inorganic and organic sources (compost, bio-fertilizers, green manure etc.).
  - Split application and placement of nitrogenous fertilizers,
  - **Use of slow releasing N-fertilizers; nitrification inhibitors and use of neem coated urea.**
- Education and training programmes for farmers etc. for curbing nitrogen effluence.

#### **SOLUTION FOR AMMONIA POLLUTION**

**Regulatory Measures:** Enforce and strengthen regulations on ammonia-emitting industries and agriculture.

**Technological Innovations:** Invest in and promote cleaner technologies for fertilizer production and livestock farming.

**Best Management Practices in Agriculture:** Encourage precision farming, cover cropping, and improved manure management.

**Public Awareness:** Raise awareness and educate the public, farmers, and industries on the environmental impact of ammonia pollution.

**Research and Monitoring:** Invest in research, monitoring programs, and data collection to understand and track ammonia pollution.

**International Cooperation:** Collaborate globally to address transboundary ammonia pollution and share best practices.

**Green Infrastructure:** Promote the use of green infrastructure for capturing and filtering ammonia from runoff and air.

**Wastewater Treatment Upgrades:** Upgrade wastewater treatment facilities to effectively remove ammonia from effluents.

**Policy Integration:** Integrate ammonia reduction strategies into broader environmental and agricultural policies, ensuring coordination between government agencies.

## **COKING COAL**

#PRELIMSNUGGETS#INDIAN GEOGRAPHY

PRIMARY  
SOURCE THE HINDU

*India plans to form a consortium of state-owned companies to facilitate coking coal imports to help domestic steel companies tide over shortages.*

#### **COKING COAL**

- Coking coal (or metallurgical coal) is a bituminous coal with a suitable quality that allows the production of metallurgical coke, or simply named coke.
- Coking coal has **a higher carbon content than steam coal**, as well as a **lower level of sulphur, phosphorous and alkalis** (World Coal Institute 2009).
- Coke is the main product of the high-temperature carbonisation of coking coal.
- Coke is an essential input material in steelmaking as it is used to produce pig iron in blast furnaces acting as the reducing agent of iron ore and as the support of the furnace charge.
- By-products of coke production such as tar, benzole, ammonia sulphate and sulphur are used for the manufacture of chemicals, as well as coke oven gas used for heat and power generation.
- 70% of the steel produced today uses coal.
- Around 0.6 tonnes (600 kg) of coke produces 1 tonne (1000 kg) of steel, which means that around 770 kg of coal are used to produce 1 tonne of steel through this production route.

#### **COKING COAL MISSION**

- The Coal Ministry launched Mission Coking Coal to address the growing domestic demand for coking coal as projected in the National Steel Policy 2017.
- The mission envisions significantly reducing coking coal imports through a transformative measure under the Atmnirbhar Bharat initiative.
- These measures encompass exploration, enhanced production, technological adoption, private sector involvement in coking coal blocks, the establishment of new washeries, increased research and development activities, and quality enhancement.

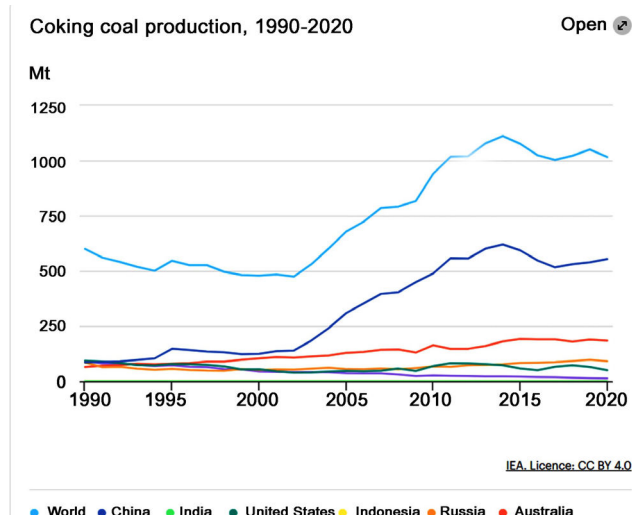
The mission has been launched to enhance production of coking coal with the following objectives:

## GEOGRAPHY, ENVIRONMENT, BIODIVERSITY &amp; DISASTER MANAGEMENT

- Enhancing coking coal production **from 52 million Tonne (MT) in FY 2022 to 140 MT** in FY 2030.
- Enhancing coking coal washing capacity **from 23 MT in FY 2022 to 61 MT** in FY 2023.

**IMPORTS OF COKING COAL**

- The import of coking coal rose 5.44 per cent to 54.46 MT over 51.65 MT in FY22.
- Australia remains the leading coking coal supplier to India.**

**PRODUCTION OF COKING COAL**

## NATIONAL CLEAN AIR PROGRAMME

#PRELIMSNUGGETS #ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

PRIMARY SOURCE THE HINDU

*The Centre's ambitious attempt to improve air quality in some of India's most polluted cities suggests that most Indian cities are far from making significant progress.*

**NATIONAL CLEAN AIR PROGRAMME**

- It was launched by **the Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change** in 2019.
- It is a **long term, time bound, national level strategy** to tackle air pollution problems across the country in a comprehensive manner.
- The **aim** is to **improve air quality in 131 cities** (non-attainment cities and million plus cities) in 24 states/UTs by engaging all stakeholders.

**Targets:** Initially the target is to **achieve a 20% to 30% reduction of PM10 and PM2.5 concentrations by the**

**year 2024, keeping base year as 2017** for comparison of concentrations.

- The new target is to achieve **reductions of PM10 concentration up to 40%** or **achievement of National Ambient Air Quality standards for PM10 by 2025-2026 (Base year 2017).**

**OBJECTIVE OF NCAP**

- To **ensure stringent implementation of mitigation measures** for prevention, control, and abatement of air pollution.
- Effective and proficient **ambient air quality monitoring network across the country** for ensuring a comprehensive and reliable database.
- To augment **public awareness and capacity-building measures** for inclusive public participation and for ensuring trained manpower and infrastructure on air pollution.

**PORTAL FOR MONITORING**

**PRANA** – **Portal for Regulation of Air-pollution in non-attainment** cities, is a portal for monitoring of implementation of National Clean Air Programme (NCAP).

- It will support tracking of physical as well as financial status of city air action plan implementation.
- It will disseminate information on air quality management efforts under NCAP to the public.

**STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION**

- Delhi** has seen an average **annual decline of PM 2.5 levels by 5.9%.**
- Navi Mumbai** has seen a **46% rise in PM 2.5 levels.**
- Varanasi** witnessed **72% average reduction in PM 2.5 levels** and **69% reduction in PM 10 levels.**
- Respirer Living Sciences and Climate Trends, analysed 49 cities** whose data are available for 5 years shows that,
  - 27 cities showed a decline in PM2.5 level.
  - Only 4 had met or exceeded the target.

## HUMBOLDT ENIGMA

#PRELIMSNUGGETS #ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

PRIMARY SOURCE THE HINDU

*Explorers and naturalists have been asking this question for centuries. Many have also been curious why some areas are more biodiverse than others.*

**ABOUT HUMBOLDT ENIGMA**

- The name derives from **Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859)** – a polymath who recorded observations on various natural phenomena across the fields known today as geography, geology, meteorology, and biology.
- He suggested **that there was a relationship between temperature, altitude, and humidity on the one hand and biodiversity on the other hand.**
- The world's tropical areas receive more energy from the Sun because of the earth's angle of inclination. So, tropics have greater primary productivity, which then facilitates greater diversity, more ecological niches, creating more complex ecosystems and greater biological diversity.
- The proponents of Humboldt's enigma have held that the Earth's tropical areas by themselves don't contain all the biodiverse regions, that many areas outside the tropics are highly biodiverse. These places are mountains.
- The diversity tends to decrease from the tropics however mountains are exceptions.
- Mountain hosts two processes that generate biodiversity.
  - Geological Process-Like uplift results in new habitats where new species arise, so the habitats are '**cradles**.'
  - Species on some climatologically stable mountains persist there for a long time, so these spots are '**museums**' that accumulate many such species over time.
- Coastal tropical sky islands (mountains surrounded by lowlands), like the Shola Sky Islands in the Western Ghats, are a good example.
  - Here, old lineages have persisted on the mountain tops as climates and habitats fluctuated around them in the lower elevations.
  - This is the reason some of the oldest bird species in the Western Ghats, such as the Sholicola and the Montecincla, are housed on the Shola Sky Islands.
- The same mountain can be both a cradle for some species and museum for others, depending on the species' ecologies.
- The northern Andes range – including Chimborazo – is considered the most biodiverse place in the world.
  - If we start from the foothills of the Andes and climb, we're going to encounter different temperatures and rainfall levels that support everything from tropical

evergreen biomes in the lower elevation to the alpine and tundra biomes near the top.

- Such a large variation over short distances supports the immense biodiversity found in mountain regions – and worldwide.
- Another critical force in biodiversity formation is geology.
  - Plants are influenced by the type of soil, which depends on the type of rocks in that area. So high geological heterogeneity often produces unique habitat patches on mountains within similar climate regimes and promotes diversification.
- Climate dissimilarity is another crucial factor, something Humboldt also indicated based on his observations of the Chimborazo and understood to be a paradigm.
  - Researchers have also found some groups of birds to have evolved elsewhere and dispersed to the Himalaya, resulting in higher diversity there.

**GREEN VOYAGE 2050 PROJECT**

- The IMO GreenVoyage2050 Project is supporting shipping's transition towards a low carbon future.
- The GreenVoyage2050 Project is working with 12 countries: Azerbaijan, Belize, China, Cook Islands, Ecuador, Georgia, India, Kenya, Malaysia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Sri Lanka.



## BIG CAT'S RETURN BRINGS HOPE IN BUXA TIGER RESERVE

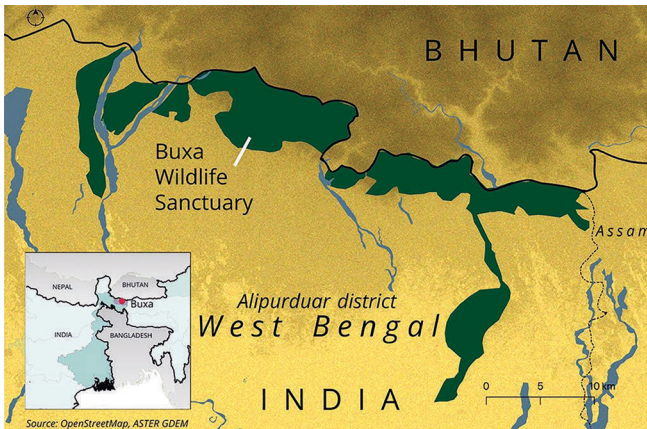
#PRELIMSNUGGETS #ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

PRIMARY SOURCE | The Indian EXPRESS

*The previous sighting in 2021 was after 23 years of the big cat went missing from the Buxa tiger reserve.*



### **BUXA NATIONAL PARK**



- Buxa Tiger Reserve was brought under Project Tiger in 1983 and became India's fifteenth Tiger Reserve.
- Buxa Tiger reserve and National Park covers is located in North Bengal's Alipurduar district.
- Its northern boundary runs along the international border with Bhutan.
- The Phibsoo Wildlife Sanctuary of Bhutan is contiguous to the north of BTR.
- Manas National Park lies east of BTR. BTR, thus, serves as international corridor for Asian elephant migration between India and Bhutan.
- To the south-west, the Chilapata Forests form an elephant corridor to the Jaldapara Wildlife Sanctuary.
- The eastern side of the Reserve forms the interstate boundary with Assam, demarcated by River Sankosh.
- Many rivers and streams intersect the Reserve, the important ones are the Rydak, Jainty, Bala and Dima
- Mammals presents include Asian elephant, gaur, Sambar deer, clouded leopard, Indian leopard, and Asian golden cat.

## **THE REVIVAL OF TIGER**

#PRELIMSNUGGETS #ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

**PRIMARY SOURCE** *The Indian EXPRESS*

*The near extinction of Tigers in 1973 was pivotal moment in India's Conservation history.*

### **ABOUT CORBETT NATIONAL PARK**

- Jim Corbett National Park is a national park in India located in the Nainital district of Uttarakhand state.
- The first national park in India, it was established in 1936 during the British Raj and named Hailey National

Park after William Malcolm Hailey, a governor of the United Provinces in which it was then located.

- In 1956, nearly a decade after India's independence, it was renamed Corbett National Park after the hunter and naturalist Jim Corbett, who had played a leading role in its establishment and had died the year before.
- The park was the first to come under the Project Tiger initiative.
- The park encompasses the Patli Dun valley formed by the **river Ramganga**.
- It protects parts of the Upper Gangetic Plains moist deciduous forests and Himalayan subtropical pine forests ecoregions.
- It has a humid subtropical and highland climate.

### **CONSERVATION OF TIGERS**

#### **Research and monitoring**

- The National Tiger Conservation Authority and state forest departments conduct camera-trapping exercises and line-transect monitoring in all its tiger landscapes to monitor tigers, co-predators, and prey base.

### **MITIGATING HUMAN-TIGER CONFLICT IN SELECT AREAS WITHIN LANDSCAPES**

- It involves the local communities living close to tiger reserves in its overall tiger conservation strategy by promoting sustainable livelihoods, reducing forest dependence, and strengthening local support for conservation.
- **The Beehive Fences** are simple and cheap, made with no cement and using only locally sourced materials. Hives, or dummy hives, are hung every ten meters and linked together in a specific formation so that should an elephant touch one of the hives, or interconnecting wire, the beehives all along the fence line will swing and release the bees.
- **Living with Tiger initiatives:** It is an initiative in villages and schools around the peripheral area of the reserve.
  - This involves activism around behavioural and response awareness amongst school children and villagers around human-wildlife conflict issues and the patterns of behaviour they must cultivate, practice, and propagate to stay safe.

#### **Environment education and awareness**

WWF India regularly conducts environment education activities with local communities, stakeholders, and the broader civil society to make them aware of the critical

conservation issues and the steps they can take to help. These awareness programmes target children and teachers in schools around tiger reserves and urban cities.

### **POLICY AND ADVOCACY**

**Wildlife Protection Act:** The Wildlife Protection Act of 1972 provides legal protection to tigers and their habitats. It prohibits hunting, poaching, and trading of tigers and their body parts, and prescribes severe penalties for violations.

**PROJECT TIGER:** The Government of India has taken a pioneering initiative for conserving its national animal, the tiger, by launching the "Project Tiger" in 1973.

From 9 tiger reserves since its formative years, the Project Tiger coverage has increased to 51 at present, spread out in 18 of our tiger range states. This amounts to around 2.23% of the geographical area of our country.

- The tiger reserves are constituted on a core/buffer strategy. The core areas have the legal status of a national park or a sanctuary, whereas the buffer or peripheral areas are a mix of forest and non-forest land, managed as a multiple use area. The Project Tiger aims to foster an exclusive tiger agenda in the core areas of tiger reserves, with an inclusive people-oriented agenda in the buffer.
- Project Tiger is an ongoing Centrally Sponsored Scheme of the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change providing central assistance to the tiger States for tiger conservation in designated tiger reserves.

**NTCA:** National Tiger Conservation Authority was established in 2005 following a recommendation of the Tiger Task Force, to reorganize management of Project Tiger and the many Tiger Reserves in India. It is the overarching body for conservation of tigers in India.

**Tiger Conservation Plan:** The Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 was amended in 2006, and a separate Chapter (IVB) has been added to the 'National Tiger Conservation Authority', which has replaced Project Tiger. It has enabling provisions (Section 38V) for preparing a 'Tiger Conservation Plan' for the proper management of a tiger reserve, which will also include staff development and deployment plan.

- The tiger conservation plan in India is a comprehensive program aimed at protecting and conserving the country's tiger population.

- It is a multi-stakeholder effort involving the government, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), local communities, and other stakeholders.
- India is home to more than 70% of the world's wild tigers, and the government has implemented several conservation plans over the years to **protect these magnificent creatures from poaching, habitat loss, and other threats.**

**Global Tiger Initiative (GTI):** It was launched in 2008 by founding partners the World Bank, Global Environment Facility, Smithsonian Institution, Save the Tiger Fund, and International Tiger Coalition (representing more than 40 non-government organizations).

- The GTI is led by the 13 tiger range countries. It is a global alliance of governments, international organizations, civil society, the conservation and scientific community, and the private sector committed to working together toward a common agenda to save wild tigers from extinction.
- The GTI Secretariat, based at the World Bank in Washington, DC, assists the 13 tiger range countries to carry out their conservation strategies and drive the global tiger conservation agenda, through planning, coordination, and continuous communication.

**Global Tiger Forum:** It is an international intergovernmental body exclusively set up for the conservation of tigers in the wild in the range countries.

- Out of the 13 tiger range countries, seven are currently members of GTF: Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, India, Myanmar, Nepal and Vietnam besides non-tiger range country U.K.
- The secretariat is based in New Delhi, India.
- GTF's goal is to highlight the rationale for tiger preservation and provide leadership and a common approach throughout the world in order to safeguard the survival of the tiger, its prey, and its habitat.

**CA|TS:** - CA|TS is a conservation tool that sets best practice and standards to manage target species and encourages assessments to benchmark progress.

- In India, the implementation of CA|TS was initiated by the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change, in collaboration with the intergovernmental agency, Global Tiger Forum (GTF) and WWF India in the year 2015.

**TRAFFIC INDIA**

- TRAFFIC (Trade Records Analysis of Flora and Fauna in Commerce), the Wildlife Trade Monitoring Network, is a global non-governmental organization monitoring the trade in wild plants and animals.
- TRAFFIC focuses on preserving biodiversity and sustainable legal wildlife trade while working against unsustainable illegal wildlife trade. It was originally created in 1976 as a specialist group of the Species Survival Commission of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and evolved into a strategic alliance of the World wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and the IUCN
- TRAFFIC is a joint programme of WWF and IUCN. In India, it operates as a division of WWF India, intending to monitor and investigate the wildlife trade and provide information to stakeholders as a basis for effective conservation policies.
- It conducts regular capacity-building programmes to improve the understanding of wildlife laws and their implications for an array of enforcement agencies such as forest departments, police, customs, and paramilitary forces.

**OTHER INITIATIVES**

- **E-Eye**- It is a large-scale intelligent technology capable of 24/7 all-weather, live-feed wildlife surveillance in vulnerable areas and sanctuary perimeters, collecting and interpreting wildlife crime data to alert law enforcement before violations occur.
  - The anti-poaching apparatus secures protected areas by helping monitor hard-to-access regions, detect intruders, manage patrols, and keep rangers accountable. It also helps reserve managers study wildlife.
  - Its developers and users hope to expand it to other domestic and international reserves to protect more tigers and other threatened species, such as elephants.
- **M-STRIPES** -short for Monitoring System for Tigers - Intensive Protection and Ecological Status, is a software-based monitoring system launched across Indian tiger reserves by the Indian government's National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) in 2010.
  - The system's objective is to strengthen patrolling and surveillance of the Endangered Bengal tiger.

## SNOW LEOPARDS - DARJEELING ZOO

#PRELIMSNUGGETS #ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

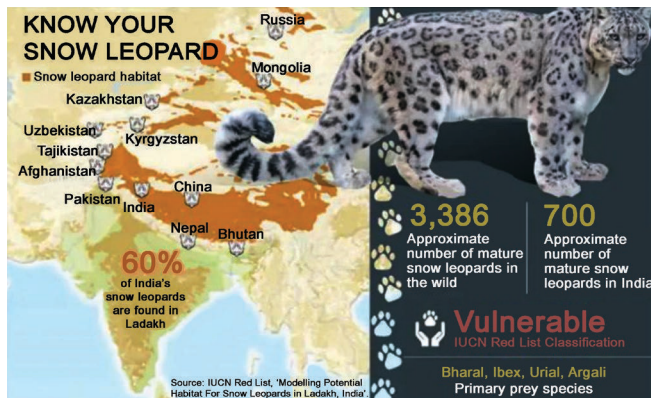
PRIMARY  
SOURCE The Indian  
EXPRESS

*Darjeeling zoo started a conservation breeding programme nearly four decades ago.; it now has the **largest number of snow leopards in captivity** in the world.*

**SNOW LEOPARD**

- Scientific name of Snow Leopard is **Panthera uncia**
- They are also called the '**ghosts of the mountains**'.
- The snow leopard is the **state animal of Himachal Pradesh**.
- The snow leopard's fur is white to brown and has black spots around its head and neck.
- It preys on Himalayan Blue Sheep, Himalayan Tahr, Tibetan Argali and Himalayan Ibex etc.
- Snow leopards are sparsely distributed in **12 countries of Central Asia, from southern Russia to the Tibetan Plateau, including Mongolia, China, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India and Nepal**.
- In India, it is found in **Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh, Uttarakhand, Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim and Himachal Pradesh**.
- **Accommodation Type:** Forests, shrubs, grasslands, rocky areas



**Conservation Status:**

- Appendix I: Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES)
- Schedule I: Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972
- IUCN Status: - **'Vulnerable'**

**NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS FOR THE PROTECTION OF SNOW LEOPARDS****Indian Efforts:**

- **Project Snow Leopard (PSL):** The project was **launched in 2009** to promote an inclusive and participatory approach to the conservation of snow leopards and their habitat.

**International Efforts: -**

- On the **Bishkek Declaration for the conservation of snow leopards** by 12 'Snow Leopard' Range Countries (Afghanistan, Bhutan, China, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan) in 2013
- During this, the **'Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection'** (GSLEP) program was also launched. **India is a signatory to the programme.**

**ABOUT DARJEELING ZOO**

- **Official name of Darjeeling Zoo is Padmaja Naidu Himalayan Zoological Park (PNHZ).**
- It is located in the town of Darjeeling in the Indian state of **West Bengal.**
- The zoo has been a pioneer for **conservation breeding of endangered Eastern Himalayan Species in India.**
- The **first ex-situ conservation breeding program started in 1986 as a Snow Leopard conservation breeding project.**
- The **Red Panda project** was started in 1990. In 2003-04 the park released 4 female Red Pandas into the Singalila National Park. **This was the first reintroduction**

**programme for the species in the world and was immensely successful.**

- The park also includes 3 conservation breeding centers, Old Conservation Breeding Center, Conservation Breeding Center at Topkeydara, Satellite Zoo at Dowhill.
- The zoo has been a part of the **World Association of Zoos and Aquarium (WAZA)** and **Zoological Information Management System (ZIMS)** since 2009.
- The zoo was awarded the **"Royal Bank of Scotland Earth Hero Award"** as recognition for its efforts towards in-situ and ex-situ conservation, in 2014.
- In the year 2022, **the Central Zoo Authority of India (CZA) ranked PNHZ Park First in all categories among all zoos in the country.**

**WORLD ASSOCIATION OF ZOOS AND AQUARIUM**

- WAZA is the **global alliance of regional associations, national federations, zoos, and aquariums**, dedicated to the care and conservation of animals and their habitats around the world.
- WAZA has formed partnerships with leading international conservation organizations, committing its members to tackle global issues such as **the illegal wildlife trade, coral-reef restoration, marine litter, sustainable palm oil and climate change.**
- It was founded in 1935.

**CENTRAL ZOO AUTHORITY OF INDIA**

- It was established as a **statutory body** under the Ministry of Environment & Forest in the year 1992.
- It was established under the Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972.
- The main **objective** is to **complement and strengthen the national efforts** in conservation of the rich biodiversity of India, **particularly the fauna as per the National Zoo Policy of 1988.**
  - Enforcing the **minimum standards and norms for upkeep and healthcare of animals** in Indian Zoos and **to control the mushrooming of unplanned and ill-conceived zoos.**

**WATER BIRDS**

#PRELIMSNUGGETS #ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

PRIMARY  
SOURCE THE HINDU

*The Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve, better known as the safest address of the greater one-horned rhinoceros,*

**GEOGRAPHY, ENVIRONMENT, BIODIVERSITY & DISASTER MANAGEMENT**

has recorded a 27% increase in the number of resident and winter migratory waterbirds (**5<sup>th</sup> Water Bird Census**).

**WATER BIRD CENSUS**

- The Asian Waterbird Census (AWC) is part of the **global International Waterbird Census (IWC)**.
- This **citizen-science programme** supports the conservation and management of wetlands and waterbirds worldwide.
- It takes place every January.

- It is coordinated globally by **Wetland International**.

**KAZIRANGA NATIONAL PARK AND TIGER RESERVE**

- Formed in 1908 on the recommendation of Mary Curzon (the wife of the Viceroy of India – Lord Curzon of Kedleston).
- The park is located on the edge of the Eastern Himalayan biodiversity hotspots – Golaghat and Nagaon districts of the state of Assam.



- In the year 1985, the park was declared as a **World Heritage Site by UNESCO**.
- With the rising population of Tigers in the Park, **Kaziranga was declared as Tiger Reserve in 2006**.
- The park's ecological significance made the Bombay Natural History Society and BirdLife International list Kaziranga as an **Important Bird Area**.
- **More than 50% of its landmass under grasslands** is dotted with waterbodies, locally known as **bells**.

**The park area is circumscribed by the:**

- Brahmaputra River, which forms the northern and eastern boundaries of Mora Diphlu, which forms the southern boundary.
- Other notable rivers within the park are the Diphlu and Mora Dhansiri.

**FAUNA**

- It is home to more than 2200 Indian one-horned rhinoceros, approximately 2/3rd of their total world population.
- **Apart from being the home of the Big Five mammals — rhino, tiger, elephant, Asiatic water buffalo, and eastern swamp deer — the park is a popular destination for birders as it sustains more than 500 avian species.**
- The park is the breeding ground of elephants, wild water buffalo, and swamp deer.
- Hoolock Gibbon, Tiger, Leopard, Indian Elephant, Sloth Bear, Wild water buffalo, and swamp deer are Important species found here.



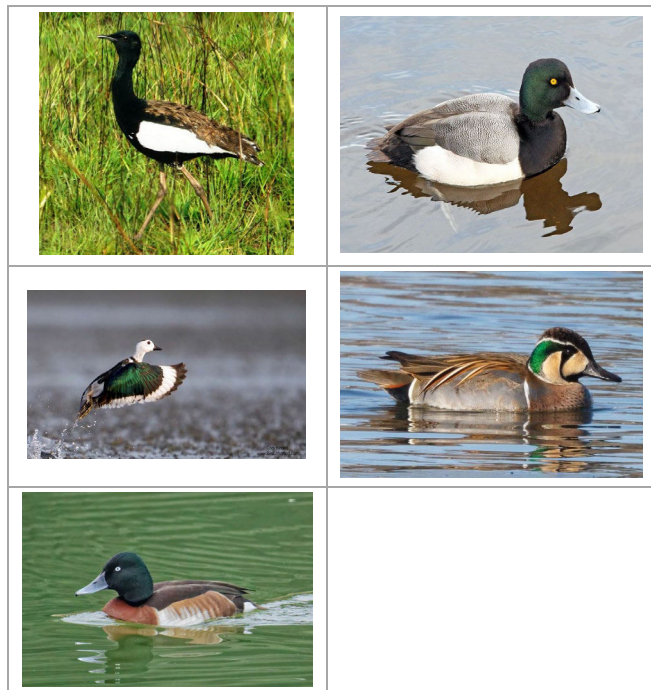
- The park is also recognized as an Important Bird Area by Birdlife International for the conservation of avifaunal species.
- Birds like lesser white-fronted goose, ferruginous duck, Baer's pochard duck and lesser adjutant, greater adjutant, black-necked stork, and Asian Openbill stork especially migrate from the Central Asia during the winter season.

#### FLORA

- Kaziranga National park's 430 sq. km. area is sprinkled with elephant-grass meadows, swampy lagoons, and dense forests.
- Due to the difference in altitude between the eastern and western areas of the park, four types of vegetation are found:
  - Alluvial inundated grasslands
  - Alluvial savanna woodlands
  - Tropical moist mixed deciduous forests
  - Tropical semi-evergreen forests.

#### KEY FINDINGS OF BIRD CENSUS

- It revealed the presence of 84,839 birds, which was 18,063 more than the number recorded during a similar exercise in 2021-22.
- The notable avian inhabitants of Kaziranga include the **Bengal florican**, **swamp francolin**, and various species of raptors, vultures, and waterfowl.



- The park, a UN World Heritage Site, has the **highest concentration of the Bengal florican** after **Manas National Park and Tiger Reserve and Orang National Park and Tiger Reserve**
- Some of the **unique, rare, and endangered species reported** during the latest census were:
- **Baer's pochard, Baikal teal, greater scaup, gull-billed tern, greater white-fronted goose, great crested grebe, Pallas's gull, black stork, black-headed gull, and cotton pygmy goose.**

## PENGUINS

#PRELIMSNUGGETS #ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

PRIMARY SOURCE | The Indian EXPRESS

*A highly lethal form of bird flu has been detected in Antarctic penguins for the first time. The virus, H5N1, was confirmed in two gentoo penguins that were found dead on Sea Lion Island in the Falkland Islands, a British territory.*

#### PENGUINS

- Penguins are a group of aquatic flightless birds.
- They live almost **exclusively in the Southern Hemisphere** and **only one species, the Galápagos penguin, is found north of the Equator.**
- Highly adapted for life in the ocean water, penguins have counter shaded dark and white plumage and flippers for swimming.
- Most penguins feed on krill, fish, squid, and other forms of sea life which they catch with their bills and swallow whole while swimming.
- The **largest living species** is the **emperor penguin.**
- The **smallest penguin species** is the **little blue penguin** also known as the **fairly penguin.**
- Larger penguins generally inhabit colder regions, and smaller penguins inhabit regions with temperate or tropical climates.

#### SPECIES OF PENGUINS AND THEIR STATUS

SPECIES OF PENGUINS	IUCN STATUS
Emperor Penguins	Near Threatened
Royal Penguin	Least Concern
Adelie Penguin	Least Concern
Magellanic Penguin	Least Concern

## GEOGRAPHY, ENVIRONMENT, BIODIVERSITY & DISASTER MANAGEMENT

Humboldt Penguin	Vulnerable
Fiordland Penguin	Near Threatened

### ADAPTATION

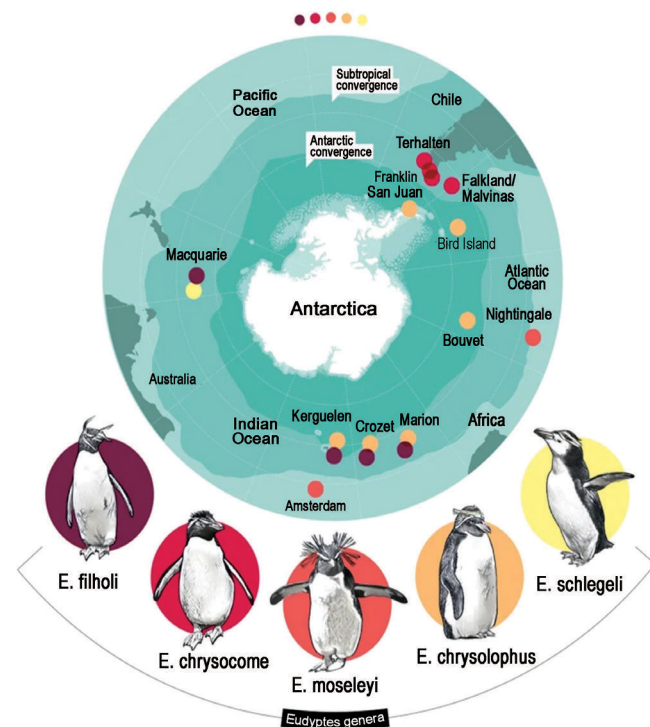
- Heavy Bones** - Although penguins are birds, they have heavy bones, while typical birds have bones that are hollow. The heavy bones allow the penguins to stay underwater like a scuba diver.
- Paddle Flippers** - Unlike fish, the penguin does not have fins. Instead, it uses its wings to move underwater. The paddle-like flippers of penguins allow them to "fly underwater."
- Strong Legs** - Penguins have strong legs that are also set back on the body. This position allows the penguin to balance itself while standing and yet makes it easy for them to steer when swimming.
- Webbed Feet and Claws** - A penguin's feet are webbed and clawed. The webbing works in the same way as the feet of a duck. It gives the penguin more surface tension or coverage to allow it to steer.
- Long and Thin Bill** - Penguins have a powerful bill that allows them to catch fish and squid. Since they have no teeth, they must rely on this bill to clasp the prey tightly, especially underwater.
- Waterproof Feather** - Penguins live in cold regions of the earth. To survive extremely cold temperatures, they have adapted to have feathers that keep them warm. Their feathers have a waterproof layer of insulation. Without this, they will die of hypothermia.
- Blubber or Fat** - Another physical adaptation of penguins is the blubber. They have a layer of fat under the skin, and this adds to their capability to stay warm.
- Counter Shades** - Counter shade means that penguins are dark at the back and white at the front. All adult penguins are like this. The theory is that this is adaptive camouflage.
- Adaptive Swimming** - Penguins need to swim fast to catch prey and evade predators. With all the adaptations combined, such as their blubber, feather, and paddle wings, they are well-equipped to navigate the sea and survive.
- Social Structure** - Apart from physical adaptations, penguins adapted to become social animals as it makes survival easier. For example, they huddle together when it is extremely cold.

### HABITAT

- Contrary to popular belief, they're not specifically dependent on a cold climate, but on nutrient-rich waters that sustain a productive enough food-chain to keep them in fish. In the tropical Galápagos and Peru, this is delivered by upwellings of deep oceanic water.
- Penguins prefer islands and remote continental regions without land predators to ensure their survival.
- Their inability to fly is not a disadvantage in these areas.
- Penguins are highly specialized marine birds adapted to long periods at sea.
- They are commonly found near nutrient-rich, cold-water currents, ensuring a steady food supply.
- Different penguin species thrive in diverse climates, from tropical islands like the Galápagos for some to the icy waters of Antarctica for others.

### GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION

- Penguins are distributed across various regions, with some species inhabiting tropical areas like the Galápagos Islands.
- Others, like emperor penguins, are restricted to the pack ice and waters of Antarctica.
- Their distribution is influenced by the availability of food and suitable conditions for nesting.



**WHY NOT IN NORTHERN HEMISPHERE**

- Penguins do not live in the Northern Hemisphere because predators such as polar bears and arctic foxes would limit their survival.
- In addition, many islands in the northern hemisphere are surrounded by sheer rocks, so penguins can't land on them.

## TEST TUBE RHINOS - NORTHERN WHITE RHINO

#ENVIRONMENT &amp; ECOLOGY #BIODIVERSITY

#PRELIMS NUGGETS

PRIMARY  
SOURCE THE HINDU

*Scientists announced the first-ever rhino pregnancy achieved by transferring a lab-made rhino embryo into a surrogate mother.*

**BACKGROUND**

- The last four northern white rhinos were brought to a conservancy in Kenya in 2009.
- **This population failed to breed in their natural environment** because the two males died, and the two females turned out to be incapable of reproduction for pathological reasons.
- **Leaving surrogacy as the only viable option to produce a northern white calf through IVF.**

**CHALLENGE**

- The embryos are all from eggs harvested from two females and sperm taken from a few deceased zoo males, even multiple successes with IVF and surrogacy **cannot build a gene pool large enough for a viable northern white population.**
- Babies will not be born genetically hardwired to behave as one of the species. They pick up those traits from family and social interactions. **So, calves born to surrogate southern white mothers need to be raised by northern white adults** to learn to be northern whites and carry that legacy for the next batch of IVF calves.

**WHITE RHINO**

- White rhinos are the second-largest land mammal (after elephants).

- They are also known as the square-lipped rhinoceros, white rhinos have a square upper lip with almost no hair.
- There are two genetically different subspecies that exist
- The Northern white rhino
- The Southern white rhino

**Difference**

- **Northern White Rhino**

- They are relatively smaller 1400-1600 kg (adult male); have straight back and flat skull. They have no grooves between ribs; hairier ears and tails and shorter front horn.



- **Southern white rhino**

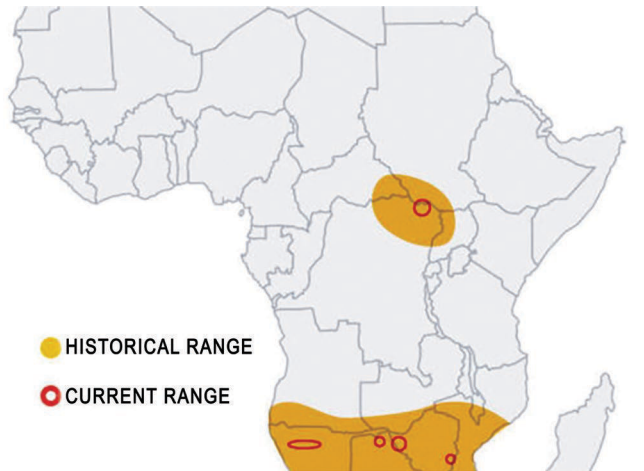
- They are larger 2000-2400 kg (adult male) in size have concave back and prominent shoulder hump. They have concave skull sometimes with distinct vertical grooves between ribs. They exhibit more body hair and longer front horn.

**DISTRIBUTION AND IUCN STATUS****Northern White Rhino - Critically endangered**

- The subspecies is practically extinct in the wild due to being wiped out in their natural habitat of Sudan, Chad, Central Africa Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo and northern Uganda, by poachers.



- The last two remaining northern white rhinos now live at Ol Petjeta Conservancy in Kenya, which is a private reserve to protect wildlife from poachers.



#### **SOUTHERN WHITE RHINO - NEAR THREATENED**

- The majority (98.8%) of the southern white rhinos occur in just four countries: South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe, and Kenya.

#### **RHINO SPECIES AND THEIR IUCN STATUS**

S.No.	Species	IUCN Status
1	Indian Rhino (Greater one horned Rhino)	Vulnerable
2	Javan Rhino	Critically Endangered
3	Sumatran Rhino	Critically Endangered
4	Black Rhino	Critically Endangered
5	White Rhino	Near Threatened

## **AGREEMENT OVER BERBERA PORT BETWEEN SOMALILAND AND ETHIOPIA**

#PRELIMSNUGGETS #LOCATION/WORLD  
GEOGRAPHY

PRIMARY  
SOURCE THE HINDU

*Ethiopia has struck a historic deal to use Somaliland's **Berbera port** in the breakaway region of Somaliland for shipping.*



#### **ABOUT BERBERA PORT**

- Berbera Port is located in the Gulf of Aden. Berbera is considered to be the commercial capital of Somaliland.
- The deal will give Ethiopia access to the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden and the Suez Canal. Ethiopia is Africa's second largest populated country and is landlocked. Ethiopia lost its access to the sea when Eritrea seceded from Ethiopia and declared independence in 1993.

#### **ABOUT SOMALILAND**

- Somaliland, officially the Republic of Somaliland, is an **unrecognized state** in the Horn of Africa, recognized internationally as de jure part of Somalia.
- It is located in the southern coast of the Gulf of Aden and bordered by Djibouti to the northwest, Ethiopia to the south and west, and Somalia to the east.
- The **capital** and **largest** city is **Hargeisa**.
- Since 1991, the territory has been governed by democratically elected governments that seek international recognition as the government of the Republic of Somaliland.
- Central government maintains ties with some foreign governments, who have sent delegations to Hargeisa.
- Somaliland is currently **recognized by the Republic of China** (Taiwan) and hosts representative offices from several other countries, most notably Ethiopia.



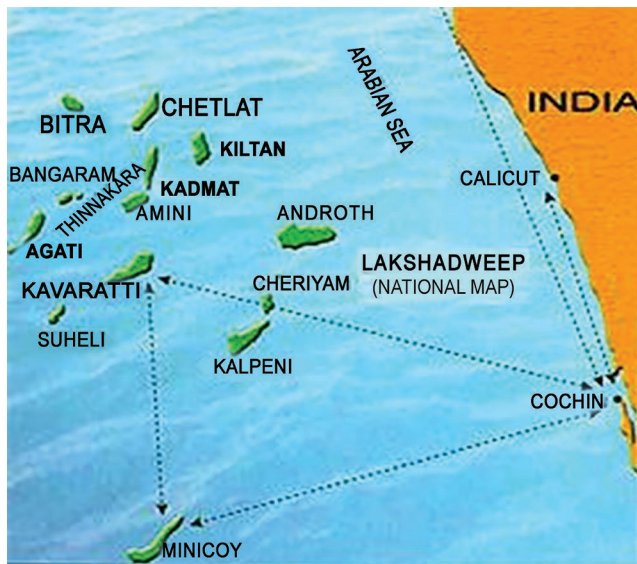
- However, Somaliland's self-proclaimed independence **has not been officially recognized by any UN member state or international organization.**
- It is a member of **Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization**, an advocacy group whose members consist of indigenous peoples, minorities and unrecognized or occupied territories.

## LAKSHADWEEP

#PRELIMSNUGGETS #INDIAN GEOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCE THE HINDU

Recently Prime Minister visited Lakshadweep Island.



**Map of Lakshadweep Island**

- India's smallest Union Territory Lakshadweep is an archipelago consisting of 36 islands with an area of 32 sq. km.
- The capital is Kavaratti, and it is also the principal town of the UT. Minicoy is the largest island.
- They are formed due to deposition of corals.
- 10/36 Islands are inhabited.
- All Islands are 220 to 440 km away from the coastal city of Kochi in Kerala, in the emerald Arabian Sea.
- The Eight Degree Channel separates the islands of Minicoy and Maldives.
- The Nine Degree Channel separates the island of Minicoy from the main Lakshadweep archipelago.

- The majority of the indigenous population is Muslim and most of them belong to the Shafi school of the Sunni sect.
- The islanders are ethnically similar to the Malayali people of the nearest Indian state of Kerala.
- Most of the population speaks Jeseri with Dhivehi being the most spoken language in Minicoy Island.

## ADVANCED LANDING GROUND (ALG)

#PRELIMINARYNUGGETS #INDIAN GEOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCE THE HINDU

C-130 Super Hercules tactical transport aircraft of the Indian Air Force made a night landing at the Advanced Landing Ground (ALG) in Kargil close to the Line of Control (LoC) with Pakistan along with a team of Garud special forces.

### ABOUT NEWS

- ALG was located at an altitude of around **10,000 feet** and was a **restricted airstrip** with a **unidirectional approach surrounded by rough terrain.**
- It **does not have night-landing facilities.**
- This demonstrates the capability to carry out specialized missions round the clock in this area.
- The Kargil ALG is also significant because this is **the only airstrip in this area critical** for any exigency.
- In Jammu and Kashmir, the IAF has full-fledged airfields at **Srinagar, Awantipora, Udhampur and Jammu.**
- In Ladakh, the IAF has airfields **at Leh and Thoise** and ALGs at **Nyoma, Fukche and Daulat Beg Oldi (DBO).**



## KRISHNARAJA SAGAR DAM

#PRELIMSNUGGETS #INDIAN GEOGRAPHY

#LOCATIONS

PRIMARY  
SOURCE

THE HINDU

*The High Court of Karnataka has banned all types of mining and quarrying activities within a 20-km radius of the historic Krishnarajasagar (KRS) dam in Mandya district.*

### ABOUT JUDGMENT

- The Karnataka High Court said that the ban will apply even for those mining activities within a 20-km radius for which permissions/licences were already granted by the authorities, or already operating in the area, or were permitted on the orders of the court in earlier rounds of litigation.
- The court also said that the ban will be in force till the completion of a study by experts and the decision taken by the **State Committee on Dam Safety, set up as per the provisions of the Dam Safety Act, 2021.**

### ABOUT KRISHNARAJASAGAR DAM



- Krishna Raja Sagar Dam is also known as KRS Dam. It is one of the famous dams in South India.
- Built over Cauvery (Kaveri) River** near confluence of **Cauvery, Hemavathi and Lakshmana Tirtha.**
- Named after **Krishnaraja Wodeyar IV of Mysore.** Built during the rule of Wodeyar's in 1932.

- It is a major source of drinking water for Mysore and Bangalore city, KRS dam is also one of the main sources of irrigation water for Mandya and Mysore. Along with this, its major purpose is to ensure power supply to the Shivanasamudra hydroelectric power station.
- With a length of 3 km, this dam also boasts of being **the first irrigation dam** of India.
- It is the creation of one of the greatest engineers that India had produced **Sir M. Vishweshwaraiah.** Often referred as the '**architect of modern Mysore**' or '**father of planning in India**', Sir Vishweshwaraiah did create something ahead of his time with such precision and excellence, that it is a popular sightseeing place of Mysore even today. In order to honour his vast contribution in the development of India and to acknowledge the greatness of his work, the entire **India celebrates 15 September as Engineer's Day.**

## ATAL SETU

#PRELIMSNUGGETS #INDIAN GEOGRAPHY

PRIMARY  
SOURCE

THE HINDU

*PM inaugurated the country's longest bridge over the sea, the 22km Mumbai Trans Harbour link, officially the Atal Setu Nhava Sheva Sea Link.*

### ATAL SETU (ATAL SETU NHAVA SHEVA SEA LINK)

- It is the **longest sea bridge** in India.
- It is a **22km long** twin carriage way **six lane bridge over the Thane Creek in the Arabian Sea.**
- It is a 16.5-km-long sea bridge, and a 5.5-km-long elevated road on land.
- It will connect Sewri in the island city of Mumbai to Chirle in Raigad district on the mainland.
- The project is collaboration between **MMRDA (Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority)** and **Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)**, which agreed to fund 80 per cent of the project cost, with the rest being borne by the state and central governments.



### SIGNIFICANCE OF ATAL SETU

- **Bring down the average travel time** between Sewri and Chirle from 61 minutes currently to less than 16 minutes.
- **Facilitate greater economic integration** of Navi Mumbai with Mumbai with benefits extended to adjoining areas and also address the limits of growth of the Greater Mumbai Area.
- Significantly **improve connectivity between South Mumbai and the under-construction Navi Mumbai International Airport, the Mumbai Pune Expressway, the Mumbai-Goa Highway, and the main hinterland in general.**
- Provide improved access to Jawaharlal Nehru Port.
- A consistent increase in business opportunities and economic growth will be one of the positive outcomes of the Atal Setu.

### NAVIMUMBAI, PROPOSED NEW AIRPORT COME CLOSER TO CITY

**SHORTER:** 38 km is travel distance from one end of MTHL to another now (via Vashi bridge).

**NEARER:** From Chirle, an existing road connects to the Mumbai-Pune Expressway almost 18 km away. Once the planned elevated connectors to the

The 22-km MTHL will cut that distance by 16 km.

**FASTER:** Average travel time from Sewri to Chirle will be cut by 45 minutes—from about 61 minutes to about 16 minutes. During peak hours, you could save 60-90 minutes.

Expressway are built, travel time to Lonavala, Pune. Alibaug and Goa will be reduced.

**FLY EASY:** Upcoming Navi Mumbai airport is 14 km from Chirle. Will ease approach from South Mumbai.

### CONCERN WITH ATUL SETU PROJECT

- Traditional fishing communities will have to **pay a heavy price for all the development projects being carried out in fishing zones without their consent.**
- The deposition of sediments in these zones has wreaked havoc on the ecology of these areas, leading to hundreds of hectares **of rich fishing zones being transformed into thick mangrove cover**, which impacts biodiversity as well as the thousands of traditional fishers.

### WAY AHEAD

Government agencies should consult the fishing community before announcing such projects that have an impact on their livelihood.



# WETLAND CITY ACCREDITATION (WCA) UNDER RAMSAR CONVENTION

#PRELIMSNUGGETS #ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

PRIMARY  
SOURCE

pib

MoEF&CC has submitted three nominations from India for Wetland City Accreditation (WCA) of Indore (Madhya Pradesh), Bhopal (Madhya Pradesh) & Udaipur (Rajasthan) under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.

## WETLAND CITY ACCREDITATION UNDER RAMSAR CONVENTION

- It is a **voluntary accreditation** system established under **Ramsar Convention during Conference of Parties -12 (COP-12) held in 2015**.
- It **recognizes** cities which have taken **exceptional steps to safeguard their urban wetlands**.
- It aims to further promote the **conservation and wise use of urban and peri-urban wetlands**, as well as **sustainable socio-economic benefits for local populations**.
- It seeks to **encourage cities** that are close to and dependent on wetlands, primarily **Wetlands of**

**International Importance**, but also **wetlands with other conservation category status, to develop and strengthen a positive relationship with these valuable ecosystems**.

- This voluntary scheme **provides an opportunity** for cities that value their natural or human-made wetlands **to gain international recognition and positive branding opportunities** for their efforts in demonstrating strong positive relationships with wetlands.
- To be formally accredited, a candidate for the Wetland City Accreditation should satisfy the standards used to implement each of the **six international criteria mentioned Operational Guidance for WCA** of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.
- Criteria for a city or a human settlement to be accredited as Wetland City Accreditation:
  - **Criterion 1:** It has one or more Ramsar Sites, or other wetland conservation sites fully or partly situated within its jurisdiction, which provide(s) a range of ecosystem services to the city.
  - **Criterion 2:** It has adopted measures for conservation of wetlands and their ecosystem services.
  - **Criterion 3:** It has implemented wetland restoration and/or management measures.





- **Criterion 4:** It considers the challenges and opportunities of integrated spatial/land-use planning for wetlands under its jurisdiction.
- **Criterion 5:** It has raised public awareness about the values of wetlands by delivering locally adapted information, and enabled participation of local stakeholders in decision making processes.
- **Criterion 6:** It has established a local committee with appropriate knowledge and experience on wetlands and representation of and engagement with stakeholders to support the preparation work to apply for the Wetland City Accreditation of the Ramsar Convention and the implementation of proper measures to maintain the city's qualifications for the accreditation.

#### **CITIES ACCREDITED AS WETLAND CITIES**

#### **ACCREDITATION UNDER RAMSAR CONVENTIONS**

##### **Nominated Sites by India**

- These are the first three Indian cities for which nominations have been submitted for Wetland City Accreditation (WCA). These three cities have been selected by MoEF&CC based on proposals submitted by State Wetlands Authorities in collaboration with Municipal Corporations.
- **Indore:** Founded by Holkar, Indore is the cleanest city in India and the recipient of India's Smart City Award 2023 for its best sanitation, water, and urban environment.
  - **Sirpur Lake**, a Ramsar Site in the city, has been recognised as an important site for water bird congregation and is being developed as a Bird Sanctuary.
  - **Yashwant Sagar** is a Ramsar site located close to Indore.
  - A strong network of more than 200 wetland mitras is engaged in bird conservation and sensitising local community to protect Sarus Crane.
- **Bhopal: Bhoj Wetland**, Ramsar Site is the city's lifeline, equipped with the world-class wetland's interpretation centre, **Jal Tarang**.
  - Additionally, the Bhopal Municipal Corporation has a dedicated Lake Conservation Cell.

- A network of more than 300 wetland mitras is engaged in wetland management and conservation of **Sarus Crane**.

- **Udaipur:** Located in Rajasthan, the city is surrounded by five major wetlands, namely, **Pichola, Fateh Sagar, Rang Sagar, Swaroop Sagar, and Doodh Talai**.
  - These wetlands are an integral part of the city's culture and identity, help maintain the city's microclimate, and provide a buffer from extreme events.

## **GERLACHE STRAIT IN ANTARCTICA**

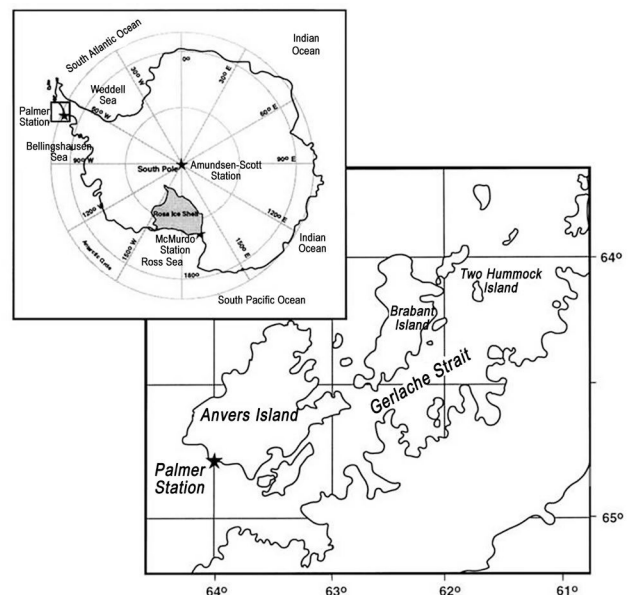
#PRELIMSNUGGETS #WORLD GEOGRAPHY

**PRIMARY SOURCE** | **THE HINDU**

*The tail of a humpback whale at the Gerlache Strait in Antarctica, Researchers from various countries are collaborating on projects analyzing the current condition of the Antarctic Sea and monitoring the species inhabiting the region, during the X Antarctic Expedition aboard the Colombian research vessel.*

#### **GERLACHE STRAIT**

- **Location:** Gerlache Strait or de Gerlache Strait is a channel/strait separating the Palmer Archipelago from the Antarctic Peninsula.



## PRACTICE QUESTIONS

### MCQS

**Q1. Consider the following statements regarding 'Invasive species':**

1. They have limited reproductive capacity.
2. They have a limited ability to adapt to different environments.
3. Invasive species enhance biodiversity by introducing new species to ecosystems.

How many of the above statements given are correct?

- |                |              |
|----------------|--------------|
| (a) Only one   | (b) Only two |
| (c) Only three | (d) None     |

**Q2. Consider the following statements regarding Western Disturbances:**

1. They are a form of Extra Tropical cyclones.
2. It is a monsoonal precipitation pattern largely impacting North India.
3. Arctic warming in recent times have increased the intensity of the Western Disturbances.

How many of the above statements are correct?

- |               |              |
|---------------|--------------|
| (a) Only one  | (b) Only two |
| (c) All three | (d) None     |

**Q3. Consider the following statements regarding the Compressed Biogas (CBG):**

1. It is a purified form of Biogas whereby hydrogen sulfide (H<sub>2</sub>S), carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) and water vapours are removed.
2. It has lower calorific value compared to Compressed Natural Gas (CNG)

3. It is very corrosive in nature which makes it unsuitable to be used as fuel.

How many of the above statements given are correct?

- |               |              |
|---------------|--------------|
| (a) Only one  | (b) Only two |
| (c) All three | (d) None     |

**Q4. With reference to deep sea corals, consider the following statements:**

1. Most of the world's deep coral reefs are in tropical waters.
2. Deep Sea corals have more animal phyla than tropical corals.
3. In deep sea corals, polyps don't have to struggle for space.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

- |               |              |
|---------------|--------------|
| (a) Only one  | (b) Only two |
| (c) All three | (d) None     |

**Q5. With reference to Ammonia Pollution, consider the following statements:**

1. Ammonia increases the soil alkalinity.
2. Ammonia increases the biological oxygen demand (BOD).
3. Nitrosomonas convert nitrate into ammonia.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

- |               |              |
|---------------|--------------|
| (a) Only one  | (b) Only two |
| (c) All three | (d) None     |

### DESCRIPTIVE QUESTIONS

**Q1.** What do you understand by Western Disturbances? How does it affect the India's climate?

**Q2.** India is particularly vulnerable to landslides. Discuss. Also bring out the landslide risk management strategy by NDMA.

**Answers:** 1-d, 2-a, 3-a, 4-a, 5-a

# SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

# GS PAPER (PRELIMS) & GS PAPER III (MAIN)

## ISSUE OF ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE

#BIOLOGY & BIOTECHNOLOGY

PRIMARY  
SOURCE THE HINDU

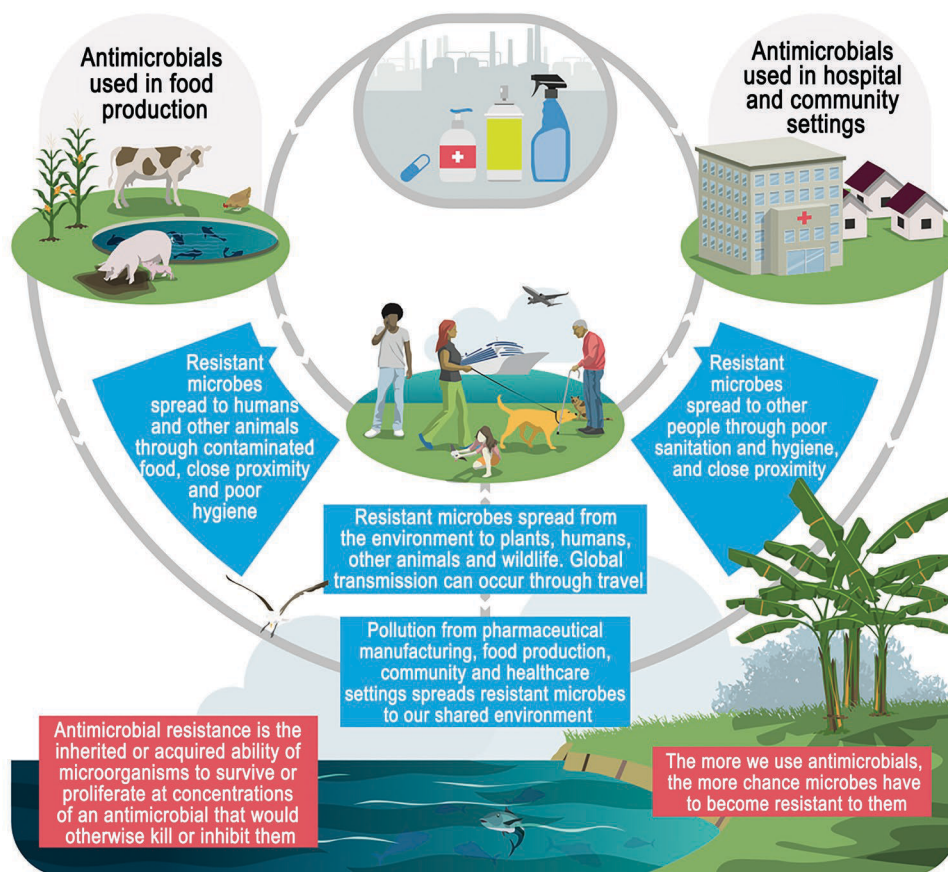
National Centre for Disease Control has released a survey mapping the patients treated for one-to-five days each at 20 tertiary-care institutes across 15 States and 2 Union Territories between November 2021 and April 2022.

- As per the survey, the key reason for growing antimicrobial resistance is the **excessive and inappropriate use of antibiotics**.

- Over half of the almost 10,000 patients surveyed were given antibiotics to **prevent infection**, rather than to treat it. 94% of patients were **prescribed antibiotics even before a definitive diagnosis** of the infection; only 6% were given antibiotics after confirmed diagnosis.

### ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE (AMR)

- AMR is the **resistance acquired by any microorganism** (bacteria, viruses, fungi, parasite) **against antimicrobial drugs** or treatments to which they were previously susceptible.
- World Health Organisation has identified AMR as one of the **top threats to public health**.



**SOURCES OF DEVELOPMENT OF AMR**

- Microbes may develop resistance to antibiotics over time through **natural mutation**.
- AMR can be acquired from **vertical gene transfer** i.e., during the process of bacterial division, the drug resistance gene is transmitted from parent to offspring.
- AMR can also be acquired by a microbe from other microbes through swapping genes via **horizontal gene transfer** i.e., genetic sequences associated with antimicrobial resistance may pass on from one microbe to another in the community.
- **Over the counter sale of medicine**, wrong prescription, incomplete doses of medication and self-medication can contribute to the development of AMR.
- **Using antibiotics in farm animals and herbicide use to control weeds** may enrich Antimicrobial resistance gene (ARGs) and Mobile genetic element (MGEs) by altering soil microbiomes and may contribute AMR development in agricultural environments.
- **Inappropriate disposal** of unused or expired medication can expose microbes in the environment to antibiotics and trigger the evolution of resistance.
- **Microplastics and untreated solid and liquid waste** can act as a reservoir of microbes resistant to antimicrobials.

**INITIATIVES OF WHO**

- **Global Action Plan on AMR**: Launched in 2015 by WHO. It provides a framework for countries to develop and implement their own national action plans.
- **WHO Global AMR Surveillance System (GLASS)**: Collects data on AMR across countries, which is used to track the spread of resistance and inform public health interventions.
- **One Health Approach**: Recognises that AMR is a complex issue requiring collaboration across human, animal, and environmental sectors.

**INITIATIVES BY INDIA****1. Prevent counter-sale of Antibiotics:**

- Antibiotics are included in **Schedule H and H1** of the Drugs Rules, 1945. These drugs have specific caution labelling requirements and are **sold by retail only under the prescription of a Registered Medical Practitioner**.

- Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation has placed 24 hi-end antimicrobials under schedule H1 by issuing notification.

**2. National Action Plan for containment of Antimicrobial Resistance (NAP-AMR):**

- NAP-AMR was launched in 2017, focusses on **One Health Approach** by involving various stakeholder ministries and departments.
- **Delhi Declaration on AMR**– an inter-ministerial consensus was signed by the ministers of the concerned ministries pledging their support in AMR containment.

**3. Red Line Campaign:**

- Launched in 2016 by the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare** to **create awareness** among the public on AMR and avoid self-medication.
- A **red line** is put on the packaging of two dozen antibiotics and antimicrobials identified by the Ministry, such that these **should not be sold over the counter without prescription** of a medical practitioner.

**4. National Centre for Disease Control:**

- Designated as the **national coordinating centre** for AMR activities in India.
- Provides technical assistance to states and stakeholders in implementing the NAP-AMR, and monitors progress and impact of AMR interventions.

**5. AMR Surveillance Network:**

- Established by the Indian Council of Medical Research.
- Comprises a network of laboratories across the country to monitor trends and patterns of drug-resistant infections.

## ASTRONOMERS SPOT UNUSUAL OBJECT THAT FALLS WITHIN THE BLACK HOLE 'MASS GAP'

#ASTRONOMY AND SPACE TECHNOLOGY

PRIMARY  
SOURCE THE HINDU

*An object has been detected in the star cluster NGC 1851, whose mass (between 2.09 and 2.71 times the mass of the Sun) falls within the black hole mass gap.*



**BLACK HOLE MASS GAP**

- The maximum mass of **neutron stars** is thought to be around **2.2 solar masses**. **Black holes** are **even more massive**, and the lightest black holes are believed to be **around 5 solar masses**.
- Between these two mass ranges lies the "**mass gap**" - a region where no objects have been definitively identified. At the boundary between neutron stars and black holes there is **always the possibility** that some new, as yet unknown, astrophysical object might exist.

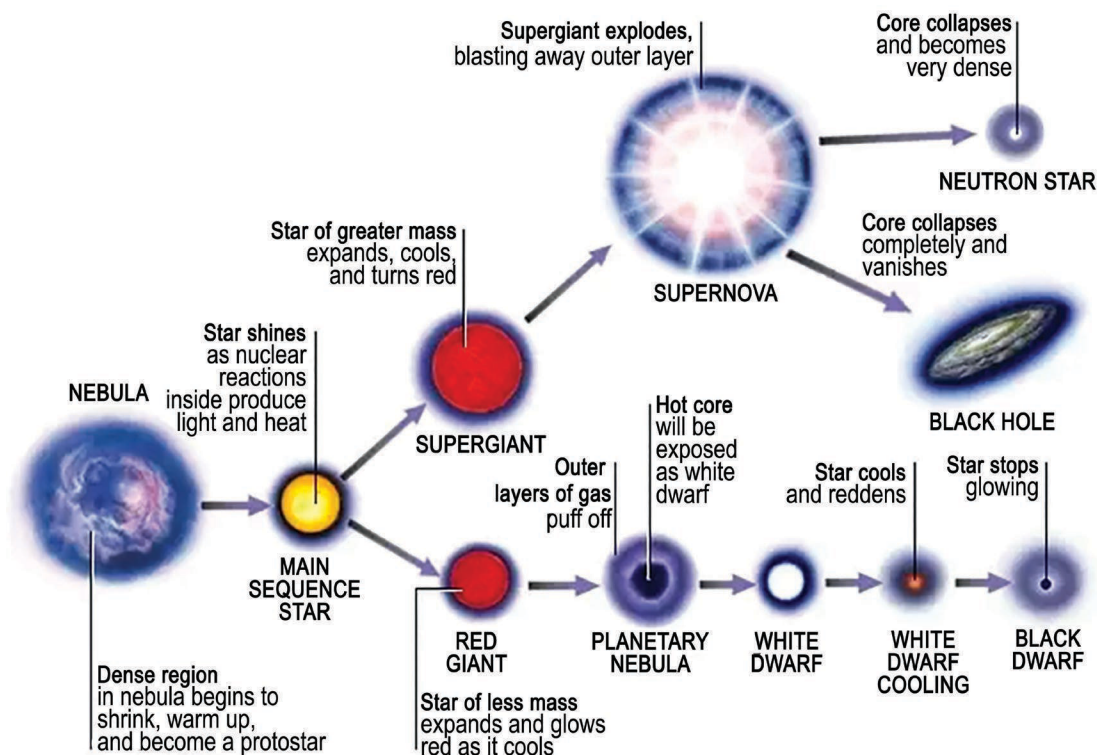
**THE NEWLY DISCOVERED OBJECT**

- This object **resides in a binary system** within the star cluster NGC 1851, roughly 40,000 light-years from Earth.
- Its companion is a **millisecond pulsar**, a rapidly spinning neutron star that emits regular pulses of radio waves.
- By studying the **pulsar's orbital motion**, astronomers have estimated the mass of the unknown object to be **between 2.09 and 2.71 solar masses**. This places it **within the black hole mass gap**.

**NEUTRON STARS**

- Neutron stars are the incredibly **dense remnants of supermassive stars** that have **exploded as supernovae**.

- Supernovae are incredibly **powerful explosions** that occur when a **massive supergiant star reaches the end of its life**.
- During the explosion, the outer layers of the star are expelled into space, while the **core collapses** under its own gravity.
- In the formation of neutron stars, the core becomes so dense that **protons and electrons combine to form neutrons**, hence the name "**neutron star**."
- Neutron stars are **about 15-30 kms in diameter** and have a mass between **1.4- 2.2 solar masses**. They are the **densest known stellar objects** in the universe, second only to the black holes.
- They have breathtakingly **high rotation speeds** with rotational periods that can be just 0.3 to 12.0 seconds. They **do not have** an event horizon.
- They often possess **extremely strong magnetic fields**, much stronger than those of regular stars. These magnetic fields can give rise to intense radiation emissions, including beams of electromagnetic radiation and particle streams, which are observable as **pulsars**.



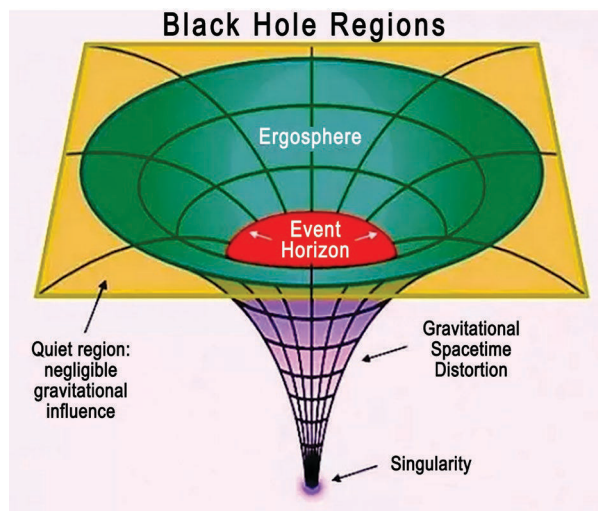
**BLACK HOLES**

- Black holes are the **regions of spacetime** where gravity is so strong that nothing, including light and other electromagnetic waves, has enough energy to escape.
- **Formation:** A black hole forms when a massive star (at least three times the mass of our Sun), exhausts its fuel, explodes in a **supernova**, and collapses under gravity into an incredibly dense core called a **singularity**.
- **Types:**
  - **Stellar Black Hole:** Formed by the collapse of a single massive star.
  - **Intermediate Black Hole:** Formed by the collapse of a star having mass between 100 and 1,00,000 times that of our sun.
  - **Supermassive Black Hole:** Masses ranging from millions to billions of times that of the sun, found at the centres of most galaxies.
- Black holes **are not directly observable** with telescopes that detect X-rays, light, or other forms of electromagnetic radiation. However, their presence can be inferred through their **effects on surrounding matter and the gravitational waves** they produce.
  - **E.g.,** If a black hole passes through a cloud of interstellar matter or if a star passes close to a black hole, it will draw matter inward in a process known as **accretion**. As the attracted matter accelerates and heats up, it **emits X-rays and powerful gamma ray bursts** that radiate into space. This reflects the presence of black holes.
  - Merger of two blackholes produces powerful **gravitational waves**. The detection of these gravitational waves (through **LIGO** - Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory) can confirm the existence/ location of the black holes.

**TERMS RELATED TO BLACK HOLE**

- **Singularity:** The **centre of a black hole** is a gravitational singularity, a point where the general theory of relativity breaks down, i.e. where its predictions do not apply. A black hole's great gravitational pull emerges as if from the singularity.
- **Event Horizon (a point of no return):** The event horizon is like a **boundary** around a black hole (around the singularity). Once anything (matter, energy, light) crosses this boundary, it cannot escape unless it travels faster than the speed of light (which is impossible). This

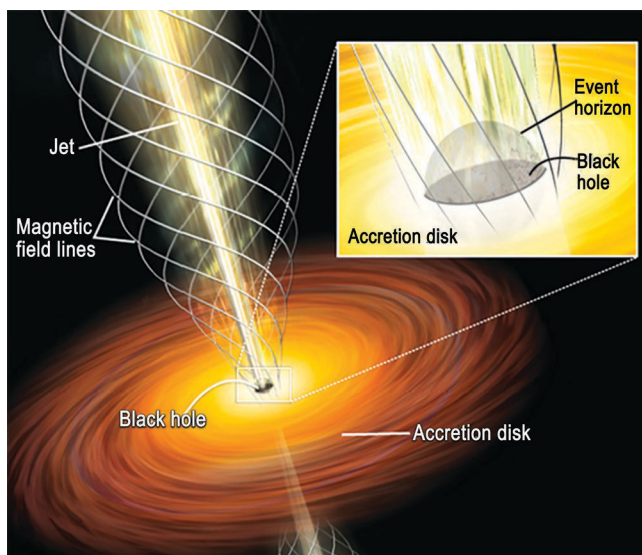
means nothing, not even light, can **escape the black hole's strong gravity** because the speed needed to escape at the event horizon should be greater than the speed of light.



- **Ergosphere:** The Ergosphere is a bigger sphere, outside the event horizon of a black hole, **where matter and even light can enter and then return** (escape the black hole's gravitational pull), if they are moving fast enough (with speeds comparable to the speed of light).
  - Both **rotating** (Kerr) black holes and **non-rotating** (Schwarzschild) black holes have an ergosphere. In the case of rotating black holes, the **ergosphere is larger** and more elongated compared to non-rotating black holes.
  - In the Ergosphere, spacetime is dragged along with the rotation of the black hole. It is **theoretically possible to extract energy and angular momentum from the ergosphere**.
    - Scientists theorise the possibility to **send an object into the ergosphere** and **allow it to accelerate there** along the black hole's direction of rotation, so that it comes out of the black hole moving faster.
    - This energy 'gain' of the object will translate to the black hole losing some angular momentum.
- **Accretion disc:** An accretion disc is a flat, rotating structure of matter (such as gas, dust, or other material) that forms around a black hole. The material in the accretion disc **spirals inward due to gravitational attraction** of the black hole. As it spirals inward, the material often heats up due to friction and

**SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY**

gravitational forces, emitting various forms of electromagnetic radiation, including visible light, X-rays, gamma rays and radio waves.



- **Spaghettification:** Spaghettification refers to the effect of extreme gravitational pressure on any particle or body of matter, in particular, when exposed to the extreme forces of the black hole.

When a particle draws too close to the event horizon, it is **stretched into long thin shapes**. E.g., If an astronaut falls into the event horizon, as the gravity is inversely proportional to distance, the pull on the falling astronaut's legs will be substantially greater than the pull on his or her upper torso. Subsequently, stretching him like spaghetti (pasta).

## SQUARE KILOMETRE ARRAY PROJECT

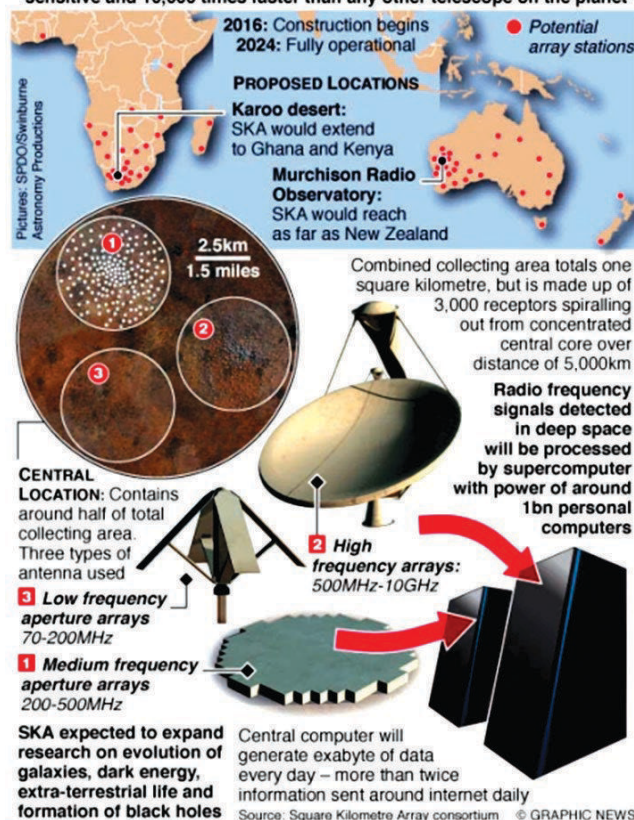
#ASTRONOMY AND SPACE TECHNOLOGY

PRIMARY  
SOURCE The Indian  
EXPRESS

Indian Cabinet has approved **Rs 1,250 crore** to support the multinational Square Kilometre Array (SKA) project, whose telescope arrays or groups of telescopes will be built in **Australia and South Africa**. India **officially gained full membership** in the SKA Project in January, 2024. A full member status in the project would provide India **preferential access** to the radio telescope.

### World's biggest radio telescope

Australia and South Africa are competing to host the Square Kilometre Array (SKA), a huge \$2.5bn radio telescope which will be 50 times more sensitive and 10,000 times faster than any other telescope on the planet



### ABOUT SQUARE KILOMETRE ARRAY PROJECT

- SKA is a **group of radio telescopes** being built in **South Africa and Australia** in two phases. The first phase is expected to begin operations by **2029**.
- The radio telescopes will be operating in **two different ranges of radio frequency**.
  - The South-African array will scan for **mid-frequency signals**, between 350 MHz and 15.4 GHz.
  - The Australian telescope will work in the **low-frequency range** of 50-350 MHz.
- Once constructed, the SKA will be the **most powerful radio telescope ever built**, capable of **detecting faint radio signals** from extreme distances, with eventually



**SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY**

over a square kilometre (one million square metres) of collecting area.

**OBJECTIVES**

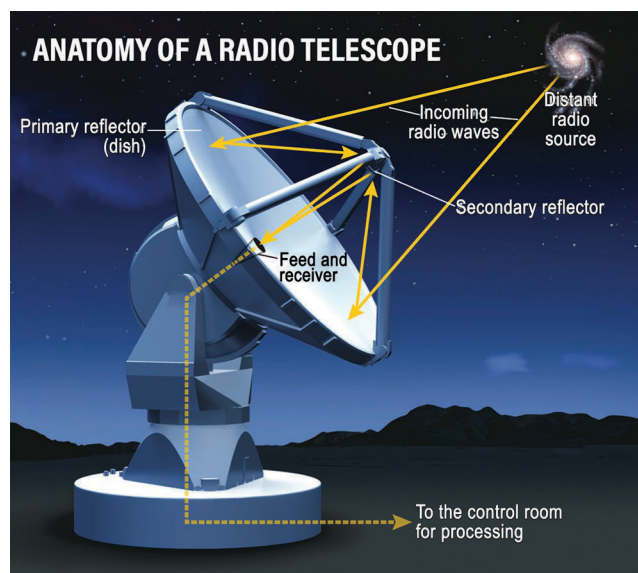
- SKA will **observe and map galaxies** at the edge of the observable universe and the Milky Way in great detail. It will **study magnetism and radiation from distant galaxies** and **map them** as well.
  - Since the **Milky Way galaxy's view is better from the Southern Hemisphere**, the arrays are being constructed there.
- **Survey data from SKA observation will:**
  - Provide deep insights about **formation and evolution of our galaxy**.
  - Detect and understand the **role of dark matter and dark energy** in the universe.
  - Aid in the **search for life beyond the Earth** by looking for planets that orbit stars in habitable zones and studying their atmosphere for organic compounds, as a part of a science programme called **Cradle of Life**.

**COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS**

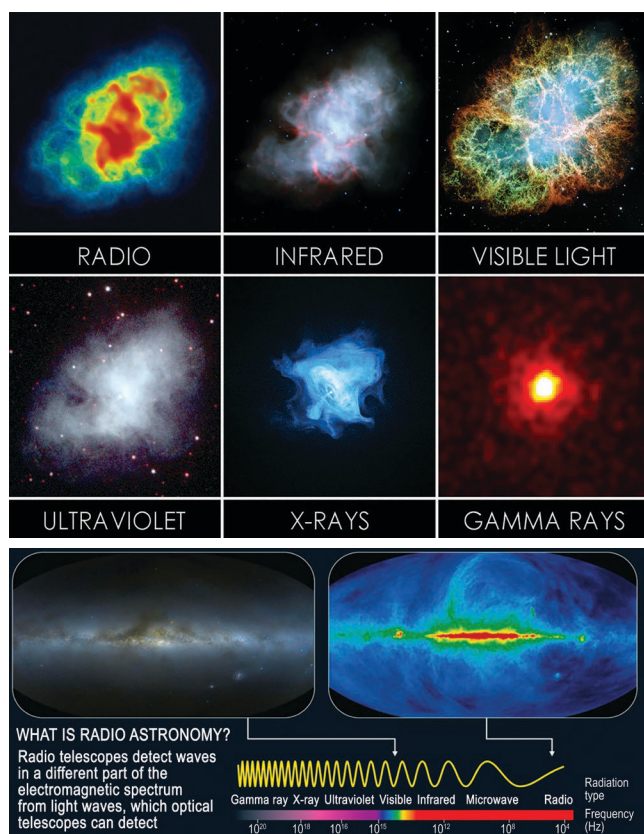
- It will also be one of the **world's largest collaborative research projects**, involving thousands of researchers and the world's fastest supercomputers.
  - **Square Kilometre Array Observatory:** Founded in 2019, the Square Kilometre Array Observatory (SKAO) has **16 consortium members** — Australia, South Africa, Canada, China, India, Japan, South Korea, the UK, Spain, Portugal, Switzerland, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, and Italy. **Headquarters:** Jodrell Bank Observatory in the UK.
  - The Indian research partner for the SKA project is **Pune's Giant Metrewave Radio Telescope**, operated by the National Centre for Radio Astrophysics (NCRA) of Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR). India's main contribution to the SKA is in the development, and operation, of the Telescope Manager element, the **"neural network"** or the **software** that will make the telescope work.
- To **improve the accuracy of triangulation of data and its resolution**, the project will include additional dishes in the future (phase 2) in neighbouring African countries — Botswana, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, and Zambia.

**WHAT IS A RADIO TELESCOPE?**

- A radio telescope is a scientific instrument used to **detect and study radio waves** emitted by astronomical objects in the universe. It is designed to **receive and amplify weak signals from space** and convert them into electrical signals that can be analysed and interpreted to study the properties of astronomical objects, such as their composition, temperature, motion, and magnetic fields.
  - Radio waves are a form of electromagnetic radiation, similar to light waves but with **longer wavelengths**. They are produced by various celestial objects and phenomena, such as stars, galaxies, pulsars, quasars, and cosmic microwave background radiation.
- **Key components:**
  - **Antenna:** Collects radio waves and focuses them onto a receiver.
    - Some radio telescopes have a single large dish antenna, similar to a satellite dish, while others use an array of smaller antennas to form a larger effective collecting area.
    - Use of multiple antennas allows for better resolution and the ability to observe a wider range of frequencies.
  - **Receiver:** Amplifies and filters the signals, converting them into electrical signals that can be processed and analysed.
- **Significance:** Radio astronomy has been instrumental in discovering new celestial objects, mapping the distribution of galaxies, studying the afterglow of Big Bang (cosmic microwave background radiation), and detecting phenomena such as pulsars and black holes.







### SIGNIFICANT RADIO TELESCOPES

- **Very Large Array (VLA):**
  - Located in New Mexico, USA
  - Observes radio wavelengths ranging from 0.7 cm to 9 metres, making it suitable for a wide range of astronomical research.
- **Atacama Large Millimetre/submillimetre Array (ALMA):**
  - Located in the Atacama Desert, Chile.
  - One of the most powerful telescopes for observing the universe in the millimetre and submillimetre wavelength ranges.
- **Giant Metrewave Radio Telescope (GMRT):**
  - Located near Pune in Maharashtra.
  - One of the world's largest and most sensitive radio telescopes operating at **metre wavelengths**.
  - It consists of 30 fully steerable parabolic dishes spread over a 25-kilometre area.

## THIRTY METRE TELESCOPE

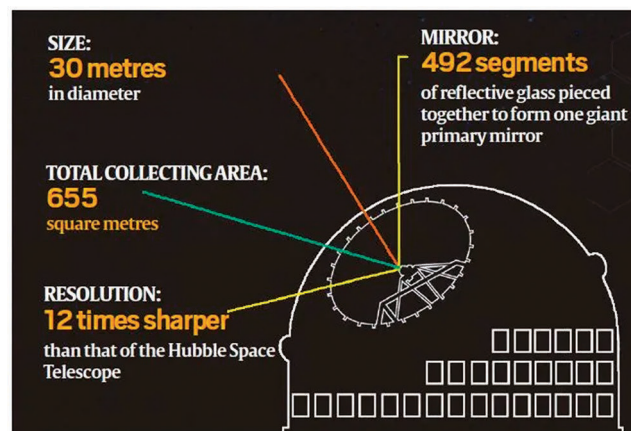
#ASTRONOMY AND SPACE TECHNOLOGY

PRIMARY SOURCE | pib

An Indian delegation visited Mauna Kea, Hawaii, USA and discussed challenges in the progress of the Thirty Meter Telescope (TMT) project. The project was started in 2014, but was soon halted due to opposition by native Hawaiians who consider Mauna Kea as sacred, and also due to concerns regarding environmental damage.

### ABOUT THIRTY METRE TELESCOPE

- TMT is an international project which aims at building a **30-metre diameter telescope** at Mauna Kea, **Hawaii, USA**.
  - At the heart of the telescope is the **segmented mirror, made up of 492 individual segments**, which makes it three times as wide as the world's largest existing visible-light telescope.
  - Precisely aligned, these segments will work as a **single reflective surface of 30 m diameter**.
    - The larger the mirror, the **more light a telescope can collect**, which means that it can see farther, fainter objects.
- Upon construction, TMT would be one of the world's most advanced and capable **ground-based optical and infrared observatory**.
  - **Wavelength:** Optical, near-infrared, and mid-infrared.
- **Estimated cost:** 1.47 billion USD (Base year 2012 USD).
- It is a **joint effort** of an international consortium of scientific organisations and institutions in **Canada, China, India, Japan and USA**.



Source: Thirty Meter Telescope International Observatory

TMT would help in the:

- **Study of exoplanets** and whether their atmospheres contain water vapour or methane — the signatures of possible life, and **detection of extra-terrestrial life**.
- Study of black holes, evolution of galaxies, dark matter and dark energy.

## PHYSICS AT HIGH ANGULAR RESOLUTION IN NEARBY GALAXIES PROJECT

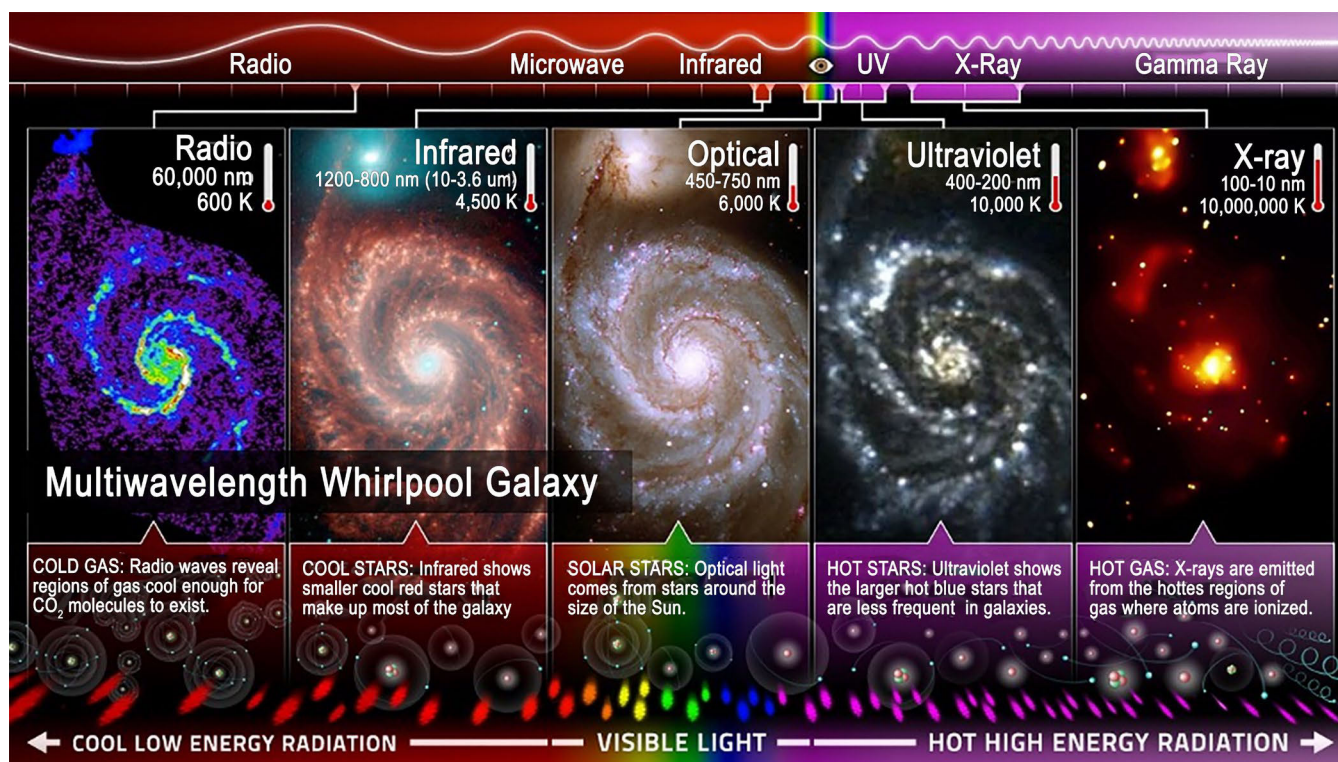
#ASTRONOMY AND SPACE TECHNOLOGY

PRIMARY SOURCE The Indian EXPRESS

Recently, James Webb Space Telescope observed 19 nearby face-on spiral galaxies as part of its contributions to the PHANGS program. These images have provided several new puzzle pieces to the understanding of these galaxies.

### ABOUT PHYSICS AT HIGH ANGULAR RESOLUTION IN NEARBY GALAXIES (PHANGS) PROJECT

- The **PHANGs** project is an initiative to **make high-resolution observations of nearby galaxies with several telescopes**.
- The project aims to **understand the interplay of the small-scale physics of gas and star formation** and how these influence the evolution of whole galaxies. It is supported by more than 150 astronomers worldwide.
- It utilises **various telescopes** including NASA's James Webb Space Telescope, Hubble Space Telescope, Very Large Telescope's Multi-Unit Spectroscopic Explorer, and Atacama Large Millimetre/submillimetre Array.



- These observations are taken in ultraviolet, visible, radio, near- and mid-infrared light.

### IMPORTANT TELESCOPES

- **NASA's James Webb Space Telescope:**
  - **Launched:** 2021
  - **Location:** Orbiting the Sun at the L2 Lagrange point (1.5 million km from Earth)
  - Largest infrared telescope ever built (6.5 metre primary mirror)
  - Detects near-infrared and mid-infrared wavelengths to observe faint and distant objects.

- **Hubble Space Telescope**
  - **Location:** Low Earth orbit (540 km)
  - Large optical/ultraviolet telescope for deep sky observations
- **Very Large Telescope**
  - **Location:** Chile
  - World's most advanced **visible-light** astronomical observatory

## POLYMER ELECTROLYTE MEMBRANE FUEL CELL

#ENERGY TECHNOLOGY

PRIMARY  
SOURCE THE HINDU

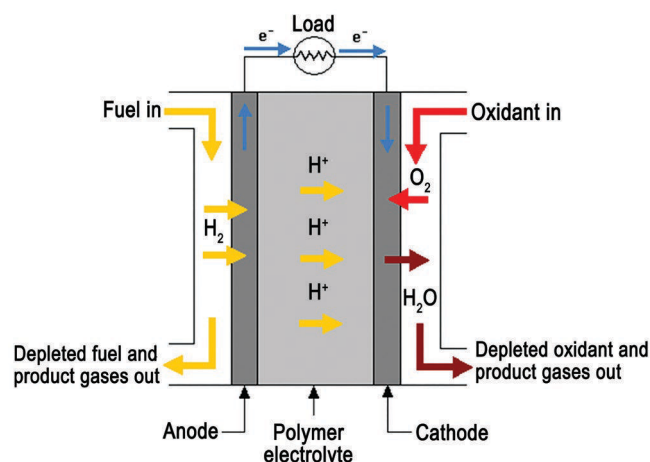
Indian Space Research Organisation ISRO has successfully tested a **100 W Polymer Electrolyte Membrane Fuel Cell Power System (FCPS)** on the orbital platform POEM3, launched aboard PSLV-C58.

### Fuel Cell:

- A Fuel cell is a device that **converts the chemical energy of a fuel directly into electricity** by electrochemical reactions.
- The most **common fuel cell is a Hydrogen fuel cell**, that combines hydrogen fuel with oxygen, to produce electricity, with water and heat as the by-products.
- The cell consists of a **cathode** (negative electrode), an **anode** (negative electrode) and an **electrolyte** (can be solid, liquid or membrane based). The **electrolyte** facilitates the movement of ions or charge carriers between the electrodes.

### POLYMER ELECTROLYTE MEMBRANE FUEL CELL

- Also known as Proton Exchange Membrane fuel cells, **use a polymer electrolyte membrane (PEM) as the electrolyte.**
  - PEM is a solid polymer electrolyte typically made of a perfluoro sulfonic acid material, such as **Nafion**.
  - This membrane allows the **transport of protons** ( $H^+$ ) through the membrane while blocking the passage of electrons. **It plays a crucial role in separating the anode and cathode reactions.**
- **Fuel:** Hydrogen with oxygen as an oxidising agent.



### WORKING OF PEM FUEL CELL

- **Anode and Cathode:** At the anode, hydrogen gas is typically supplied, and it undergoes electrochemical oxidation to produce protons ( $H^+$ ) and electrons ( $e^-$ ). The electrons flow through an external circuit, creating an electric current.
- **Catalysts:** Platinum or other platinum-group metals are commonly used as catalysts on the anode and cathode to facilitate the electrochemical reactions.
- **Electrochemical Reactions:**
  - At the anode:  $2H_2 \rightarrow 4H^+ + 4e^-$
  - At the cathode:  $O_2 + 4H^+ + 4e^- \rightarrow 2H_2O$
- **Proton Exchange:** Protons generated at the anode move through the PEM to the cathode, while electrons flow through an external circuit, creating an electrical current.

### CHARACTERISTICS OF PEM FUEL CELLS

- **Operating Temperature:** PEM fuel cells operate at relatively low temperatures (between 60-80 degrees Celsius), allowing for **quick start-up times (less warm up time).**
- **Catalyst Requirement:** To facilitate the separation of electrons and protons in hydrogen, PEM fuel cells use a noble-metal catalyst, **typically platinum** leading to high cost.
- **Carbon Monoxide Sensitivity:** The platinum catalyst is highly sensitive to carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning. If the hydrogen used in the fuel cell is derived from a hydrocarbon fuel, it may contain trace amounts of CO. The presence of CO can significantly degrade the performance of the platinum catalyst, leading to a **decrease in fuel cell efficiency** over time.



- **Carbon Monoxide Reduction Reactor:** To address the issue of CO poisoning, an additional reactor is often employed to reduce the levels of CO in the fuel gas before it reaches the fuel cell. This reactor **adds complexity and cost** to the overall system.
- **Water Management:** PEM fuel cells require effective water management to maintain the hydration level of the PEM. Water produced during the electrochemical reactions needs to be removed from the membrane to prevent flooding.

#### APPLICATIONS OF PEM FUEL CELL

- Transportation (such as fuel cell vehicles)
- Stationary power generation (backup power systems to power buildings)
- Portable electronic devices (laptops, camera, smartphones)
- Defence applications (Powering remote surveillance systems, unmanned aerial vehicles)

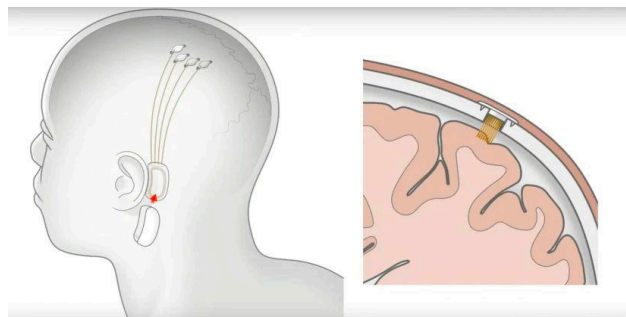
## FIRST HUMAN RECEIVES NEURALINK BRAIN CHIP IMPLANT

#NEW EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES

PRIMARY  
SOURCE

THE HINDU

As per the computer-brain interface company Neuralink, the first human has received a brain chip implant and is recovering well.



#### HOW DO NEURONS WORK?

- Nerve cells or neurons are the **basic functional units** of the nervous system. Multiple interconnected neurons form a **neural circuit** and **use electrical and chemical signals** to quickly transmit information among themselves and throughout the body.

#### Information flow through neurons

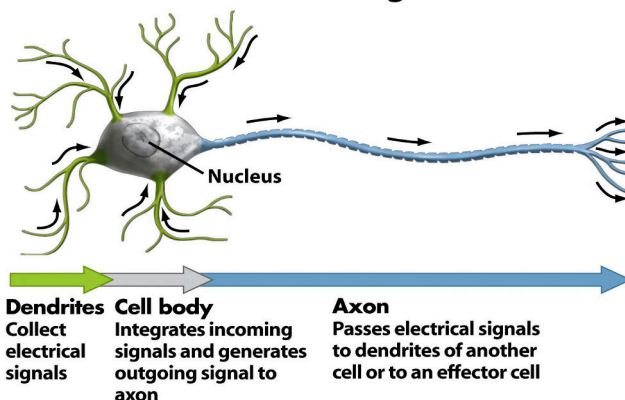


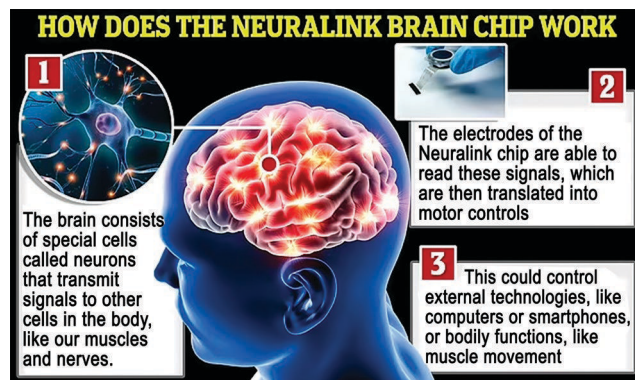
Figure 45-2b Biological Science, 2/e  
© 2005 Pearson Prentice Hall, Inc.

#### ABOUT NEURALINK BRAIN IMPLANT/CHIP

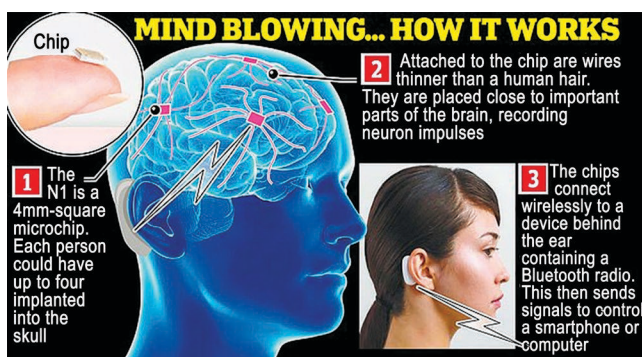
- **Rationale:** To link the nervous system with computers aimed at helping treat brain disorders, overcoming brain injuries, and other applications. This would give **users the ability to control a computer cursor or keyboard** using their thoughts alone or “just by thinking”. The initial users would be those who have **lost use of their limbs**.

#### WORKING OF THE BRAIN CHIP

- **Implantation:** The chip, roughly the size of a small coin, is implanted into the motor cortex of the brain through a **minor surgical procedure** via a robotic surgery. The chip consists of **thin, flexible threads/wires containing electrodes** which are inserted into specific brain regions, aiming to record neural activity.
- **Data Acquisition:** The electrodes **pick up electrical signals** generated by neurons firing, **translating brain activity into digital information**. The chip processes this data, identifying patterns and translating them into meaningful actions.







- **Communication:** The processed data is **wirelessly transmitted to an external device** (like a computer or phone) via a low-power transmitter.

**RISKS**

This technology is still evolving, and its long-term impact on humans is unknown. Additionally, brain surgery has significant **potential risks** such as brain haemorrhage or seizures.

**END-TO-END ENCRYPTION**

#IT &amp; COMPUTERS

PRIMARY  
SOURCE

THE HINDU

SECONDARY  
SOURCEThe Indian  
EXPRESS**WHAT IS ENCRYPTION?**

- Encryption is a way of protecting data from unauthorised access or tampering. It works by **transforming the data into a secret code** that only the intended recipient can decipher. This comes in useful for various cases, such as securing online communications, storing sensitive information, and verifying digital identities.
- There are **two main types of encryption**: symmetric and asymmetric.
  - **Symmetric encryption** uses the same key to encrypt and decrypt the data.
  - **Asymmetric encryption** uses a pair of keys: one public and one private. The public key can be shared with anyone, but the private key must be kept secret.

**WHAT IS END-TO-END ENCRYPTION (E2EE)?**

- E2EE encryption **protects data as it is transferred between end locations**, i.e., the sender and receiver can read any exchanged messages. Not even the messaging service provider.
- This is because **messages get encrypted on the user's device** before being sent and only are decrypted

when they reach the intended recipient. So one gets complete privacy from snoopers, hackers, and even the company whose service one is using.

**HOW DOES E2EE WORK?**

- E2EE generally utilises **asymmetric cryptography**, which in turn uses pairs of keys – public and private – to secure communications.
  - The public key is used to encrypt data, while the private key decrypts it.
- Users on an end-to-end encrypted system like WhatsApp each generate their own **public-private key pairs**.
  - They widely distribute their public keys, which act like open locks anyone can use to send them encrypted messages.
  - But the messages can only be unlocked and read by someone holding the associated private key.
- **E.g.,** Say Alice wants to send Bob a secret message. Alice **retrieves Bob's public key from his profile** or a trusted key server. She encrypts her message using **Bob's public key** and sends the text to Bob. Bob receives the encrypted message and **uses his private key to decrypt it**. The private key is closely guarded on his device and known only to him. This creates a secure channel only accessible to the endpoints in the conversation.

**CAN A THIRD-PARTY GAIN ACCESS TO A PRIVATE KEY?**

- The private keys cannot be hacked. This is because the **private key is stored only on the user's device** and cannot be shared with anyone else.
- Meanwhile, the **public key is stored on the server**, but it cannot be used to decrypt the messages. Therefore, even if a hacker or a service provider breaches the server, they cannot read the messages or access the private key.

**BENEFITS OF E2EE**

The core benefit of E2EE is **privacy and protects users** from hackers, criminals, overreaching governments, and even the companies providing the services.

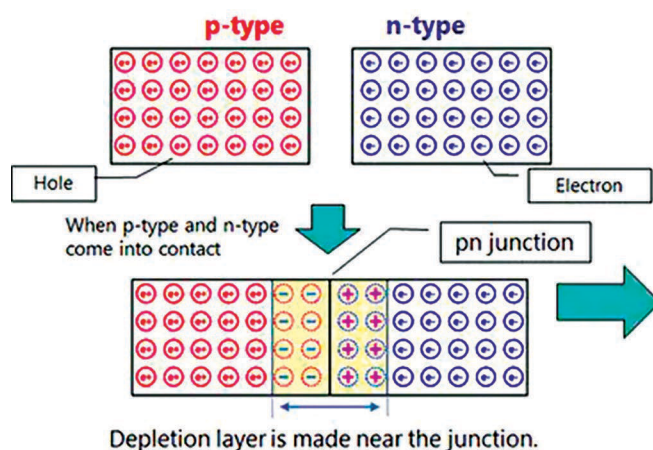
**CONCERNS**

- E2EE **enables criminal or terrorist coordination**. The law enforcement and national security agencies argue that the technology **hampers their ability to detect dangerous or illegal activities**.

- The technical drawbacks include that **E2EE** requires **more computing resources** and makes certain functions like search prohibitively difficult.

## WHAT ARE LIGHT-EMITTING DIODES?

#MISCELLANEOUS/ ENERGY/ ELECTRONICS



### SEMICONDUCTORS

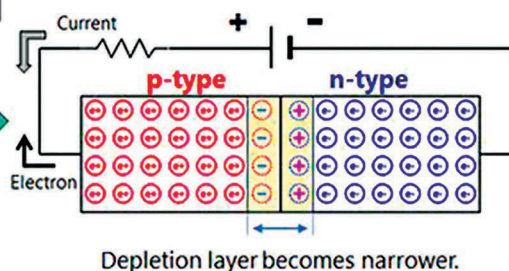
- Semiconductors are materials that have electrical conductivity between that of a conductor (like copper) and an insulator (like rubber).
  - A diode consists of two regions of semiconductor material: the **p-type region** and the **n-type region**.
    - P-type Semiconductor:** A type of semiconductor material that has an excess of positive charge carriers (holes).
    - N-type Semiconductor:** A type of semiconductor material that has an excess of negative charge carriers (electrons).
- P-N Junction:** When a p-type and n-type semiconductor are joined, they form a special zone/ interface called the p-n junction.
  - At the p-n junction (depletion region) **when a forward voltage is applied across the diode** (positive voltage at the p-type and negative voltage at the n-type), the depletion region becomes thinner, **allowing current to flow easily through the diode**.
  - On the application of a suitable voltage across the diode, more electrons flow from the n-side to the p-

PRIMARY  
SOURCE THE HINDU

### DIODE

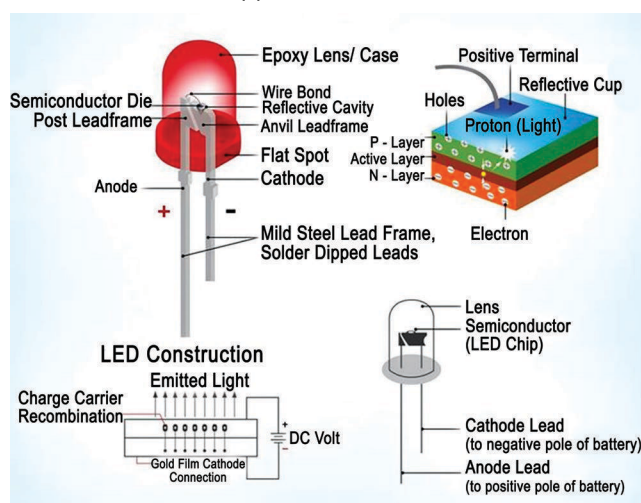
- A diode is an electronic component that has two points of contact or terminals, called anode and cathode. It is typically made from a semiconductor material, such as **silicon or germanium**.
- A diode's primary purpose is to **allow current to flow in only one direction**. It achieves this using a **p-n junction**.

Applying voltage by connecting p-type to "+" and n-type to "-" enables current to flow.



side, implying an **electric current flowing from the p-side to the n-side**, i.e., from the anode terminal to the cathode terminal.

- But if the voltage is reversed, current would not flow in the opposite direction.



### WHAT IS AN LED?

- An LED is a **diode that emits light**. Inside the diode's p-n junction, the electrons have more energy than the holes. When an electron meets and occupies a hole, it **releases energy into its surroundings**.

- If the frequency of this energy is in the **visible part of the electromagnetic spectrum**, the diode will be seen to emit light. The overall phenomenon is called **electroluminescence**.
  - In LEDs, the energy emitted when an electron and a hole recombine is the **energy of the band gap**.
  - The colour of the light emitted by the LED depends on the **energy bandgap** of the semiconductor material used.
  - By carefully choosing the materials that make up the p-layer and the n-layer, researchers can engineer the composite p-n junction to have a **band gap that corresponds to visible light**.
- LEDs can produce all three primary colours — **red, green, and blue** — different LEDs can be combined on a display board to produce a large variety of colours.
  - Scientists were able to create red and green LEDs more than 40 years before they created blue LEDs.
  - In the late 1980s, three Japanese researchers produced a **bright blue LED with gallium nitride**. For this feat they received the physics Nobel Prize in 2014.

#### **ADVANTAGES OF LEDs**

- **Energy Efficiency:** LEDs are more efficient than incandescent bulbs and fluorescent lamps. They convert a higher percentage of electrical energy into light.
- **Long Lifespan:** LEDs have a much longer lifespan and durability compared to conventional bulbs. They can last up to 25 times longer, which means fewer replacements and reduced maintenance costs over time.
- **Instantaneous Lighting:** LEDs light up instantly to their full brightness without any warm-up time, and particularly useful in applications where quick and frequent switching is required.
- **Compact Size:** LEDs are compact and can be made in very small sizes.

#### **APPLICATIONS**

- **Lighting:** Residential lighting, Commercial lighting, Automotive Lighting, Dashboard and instrument panel lighting, Backlighting for LCD screens in smartphones, tablets, and laptops.

- **Electronic Displays:** LED TVs and monitors, Digital billboards and signage, Information displays (public transportation, airports).
- **Traffic Signals and Signs:** Pedestrian crossing signals, Road signs and signal boards.
- **Indicator Lights:** Power indicators on electronic devices, Status indicators on appliances and equipment.
- **Medical Applications:** Surgical lights, Phototherapy for medical treatments.
- **Horticultural Lighting:** Grow lights for indoor farming and plant cultivation, Greenhouse lighting.
- **UV-C Disinfection:** UV-C LED lights for disinfection and sterilisation purposes, Water and air purification systems.

## **MULTIVITAMIN SUPPLEMENTS IMPROVE MEMORY AND SLOW COGNITIVE AGEING: STUDY**

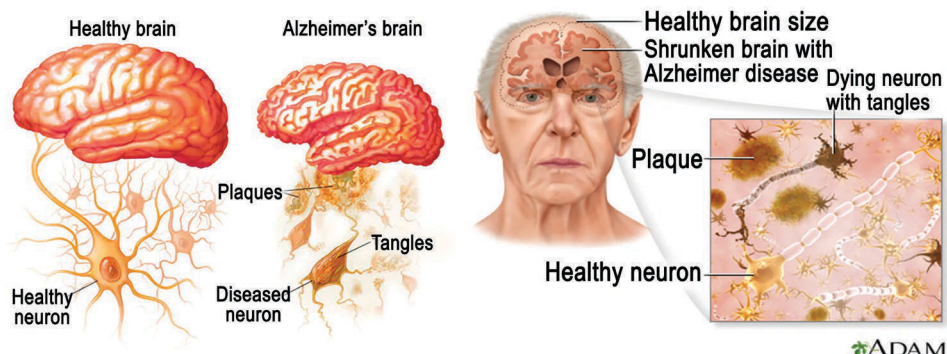
*A new global study which did a meta-analysis of 5,000 participants, suggests that daily Multivitamin supplements improve **memory and slow cognitive ageing** in older adults. Globally, the incidence of Alzheimer's disease and other dementias have increased by 147.95% from 1990 to 2019.*

#### **ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE**

- It is a **progressive neurologic disorder** that causes the brain to shrink (atrophy) and brain cells to die. It is the **most common cause of dementia** — a continuous decline in thinking, behavioural and social skills that affect a person's ability to function independently.
- **Causes:** The disease is thought to be caused by the **abnormal build-up of proteins** in and around brain cells.
  - One of the proteins involved is called **amyloid**, deposits of which form plaques around brain cells.
  - Other protein is called **tau**, deposits of which form tangles within brain cells.
- **Symptoms:** Early signs include forgetting recent events/conversations. Later, the person will develop severe memory impairment and lose the ability to carry out everyday tasks. In the advanced stages,

complications from severe loss of brain function result in death.

- **Treatment:** Currently, there is no cure for Alzheimer's disease, but certain medications can temporarily slow the worsening of dementia symptoms.



## PRACTICE QUESTIONS

### MCQS

**Q1. Consider the following statements:**

1. Neutron stars are the collapsed cores of massive supergiant stars formed by a supernova explosion.
2. Similar to black holes, Neutron stars are characterised by an event horizon.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

**Q2. Consider the following statements with reference to Square Kilometre Array (SKA) Project:**

1. Under the SKA Project, the array of telescopes will be developed in India, Europe and North America.
2. The world's powerful telescope will operate in the visual and infrared frequencies.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

**Q3. Consider the following statements with reference to end-to-end encryption:**

1. The end-to-end encryption primarily works using symmetric encryption.
2. The contents of the encrypted message can be assessed by the sender, receiver and the messaging service provider, in general.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

**Q4. Consider the following statements with reference to light-emitting diodes (LEDs):**

1. An LED is an electrical component that converts light particles into electricity.
2. LEDs require a warm-up time prior to reaching full brightness.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2



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**SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY**

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**Q5. Consider the following statements with reference to Alzheimer's disease:**

1. It is a progressive neurological disorder that is associated with severe memory impairment.
2. The disease is caused due to the death of the neurons and resulting decrease in production of dopamine.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

## DESCRIPTIVE QUESTIONS

- Q1.** What are the key factors contributing to the growing issue of antimicrobial resistance leading to a human-induced disaster?
- Q2.** Introduce the concept of a fuel cell. What are the applications and challenges associated with Polymer Electrolyte Membrane Fuel Cell Power System?

**Answers:** 1-a, 2-d, 3-d, 4-d, 5-a

# HISTORY, HERITAGE & CULTURE

# GS PAPER (PRELIMS) & GS PAPER I (MAIN)

## BHARAT RATNA AWARD

#AWARDS

PRIMARY  
SOURCE

THE HINDU

Karpoori Thakur, former Chief Minister of Bihar, was posthumously awarded the Bharat Ratna, India's highest civilian award.

### MORE INFORMATION

- Recognized as a socialist icon, Thakur gained prominence for his dedicated efforts to uplift the backward classes in Bihar.
- **During the Quit India Movement**, he faced imprisonment alongside other freedom fighters, consistently striving to oust the British colonial rulers.
- **Notably, he played a pioneering role in implementing the recommendations of the Mungeri Lal Commission** during his tenure as Bihar CM from 1977 to 1979, ensuring reservation benefits for the **Other Backward Classes (OBCs)**.

### AWARDS GIVEN BY GOVERNMENT OF INDIA



### ABOUT BHARAT RATNA

- The designation 'Bharat Ratna,' which translates to 'Jewel of India,' signifies the **highest civilian honour** presented by the Republic of India.
- **Established in 1954**, the Bharat Ratna is granted to extraordinary individuals who have demonstrated exceptional accomplishments.

- Originally focused on recognizing achievements in *art, science, literature, and public service*, the criteria underwent an expansion in **December 2011** to **encompass excellence in 'any field of human endeavour.'**
- **Selection process:**
  - Recommendations for the award can only be made by the **Prime Minister to the President**, with a **maximum of three nominees** honoured **annually**.
  - In **1999**, an **exception** saw **four individuals** receiving the honour.
  - Although no monetary reward accompanies the honour, recipients receive a unique Peepal-leaf shaped medal and a certificate known as a 'Sanad.'
  - In the hierarchy of the Indian Order of Precedence, **Bharat Ratna recipients hold the seventh rank.**
- The usage of the title '**Bharat Ratna**' as a **prefix or suffix is exempt from Article 18(1)** of the Constitution, as established by the **Supreme Court's precedent in Balaji Raghavan/S.P. Anand v. Union of India in 1995.**
- The first recipients in 1954 included *C. Rajagopalachari, the last Governor-General of the Dominion of India; Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, the second President and first Vice President of India; and Nobel Prize Laureate and Physicist C. V. Raman.*
- **Originally, the statutes did not allow for posthumous awards**, but in **January 1955**, amendments were made to permit them.
  - **The first posthumous honouree was former Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri.**
- Despite typically being conferred upon India-born citizens, **notable exceptions include Mother Teresa, a naturalized citizen, and non-Indians such as Abdul Ghaffar Khan (originally from British India, later a citizen of Pakistan) and Nelson Mandela, a citizen of South Africa.**

## HISTORY, HERITAGE &amp; CULTURE

- The Bharat Ratna, along with other personal civil honours, faced brief suspensions during the **periods of July 1977 to January 1980 and August 1992 to December 1995**, due to changes in the national government and legal challenges to their constitutional validity.
  - In 1992, controversy arose over the posthumous award to Subhas Chandra Bose, leading to a cancellation following a Supreme Court decision in 1997, a unique instance where the award was announced but not conferred.
- Recipients whose awards have been revoked must surrender their medals, and their names are struck from the register.
- There is **no Bharat Ratna Award winners list for 2020 and 2021**.

**SEVERAL SPECIAL ENTITLEMENTS**

- The medallion and its miniature counterpart.
- A Sanad (certificate) signed by the President of India.
- Treatment as a state guest by state governments when traveling within a state.
- Assistance from Indian missions abroad upon request.
- Eligibility for a diplomatic passport.
- Lifetime complimentary executive class travel on Air India.
- Occupying the seventh position in the Indian order of precedence.

**ABOUT PADMA AWARDS**

- **Padma Awards were established in 1954** to recognize and honour individuals for their outstanding contributions in various fields such as **Sports, Art, Social work, Civil Service, Literature and Education, Public Affairs, Science and Technology, Trade and Industry**, among others.

- The awardees are announced annually on Republic Day, celebrating their exceptional services.
- Despite being consistently awarded each year, **there were three exceptions: in 1977, 1980, and the period between 1993 and 1997**.
- Specific rules govern the conferment of Padma awards, including a **waiting period of five or more years for recipients** to be eligible for a higher degree of award after their last conferment.
- Posthumous awards are rare but can be **considered in exceptional cases**, and there must be a notable element of public service in the achievements of the individual.

**The Padma Awards are categorized into three levels by the Government of India:**

- 1. Padma Vibhushan:** Awarded for exceptional and distinguished service (**Second Degree Honour**).
- 2. Padma Bhushan:** Recognizing distinguished service of a high order (**Third Degree Honour**).
- 3. Padma Shri:** Conferred for distinguished service (**Fourth Degree Honour**).

**PADMA VIBHUSHAN**

- This is the second-highest civilian award in India, bestowed in recognition of **exceptional and distinguished service**.
- Recipients receive a citation certificate and a medal featuring a lotus flower in the centre, with the words 'Desh Seva' embossed on the obverse.

**PADMA BHUSHAN**

- As the third-highest civilian award, the Padma Bhushan is given to individuals who have contributed **significantly to India's reputation on the global stage**.
- The award is conferred in a ceremonial event held at the Rashtrapati Bhawan, conducted by the President of India.

**PADMA SHRI**

- This is the fourth-highest civilian award, presented by the Government of India to individuals who have made **distinguished contributions in various fields**.
- Recipients **do not receive a cash prize** but are honoured with a certificate and a medallion featuring a three-leafed flower on one side and the words Padma (lotus) and Shri (Mr. or Ms.) in **Devanagari script on the obverse**.

**Note:**

- It is noteworthy that **government servants, except doctors and scientists, working in public sector undertakings (PSUs), are not eligible for these awards.**

## DEMAND TO OFFICIALLY LIST BENGALI AS A 'CLASSICAL LANGUAGE'

#LANGUAGESININDIA #HISTORY

PRIMARY  
SOURCE THE HINDU

West Bengal Chief Minister has formally requested Prime Minister to designate Bengali as a 'classical language'.

**MORE ABOUT THE NEWS**

- The Chief Minister have highlighted the historical roots of Bengali, citing scientific research conducted by the state team, **which traces the language's origins back 2,500 years.**
  - Documents from the research demonstrates the existence of written Bengali as early **as the 3rd-4th BCE.**
  - The language *maintains its fundamental syntactic structure, distinct morphological and phonological patterns, and has evolved consistently since the 3rd BCE.*

**BENGALI LANGUAGE AND ITS EVOLUTION**

- Bengali, an Indo-Aryan language indigenous to the Bengal region in South Asia, serves as the official language in Indian states like West Bengal, Tripura, and the Barak Valley region of Assam.
- Bengali is the **second most spoken language in India, holds the seventh position globally in terms of speakers.***

**Ancient and early medieval period:**

- In ancient times, Sanskrit was spoken by Brahmins in Bengal from the 3rd century BC, while the **local Buddhist population used varieties of Prakrit, known as 'eastern Magadhi Prakrit.'**
- The Gupta Empire saw Bengal as a hub of Sanskrit literature, influencing the vernacular with Sanskrit elements.

- Over time, **Magadhi Prakrit evolved into Ardha Magadhi and eventually into Apabhramsa,** leading to the distinct evolution of the Bengali language.

**Medieval period and Islamic influences:**

- The medieval period brought Islamic influence to Bengal, with merchants from the Middle East and Turkestan contributing to the region's cultural dynamics.
- Bengal gained prominence over Persian in the court of the Sultans of Bengal.** Islamic culture left its imprint on the language, with **Bengali adopting many Arabic and Persian words.**
- However, **court support diminished with the Mughal Empire's conquest of Bengal** in the late 16th and early 17th century.

**Modern period and literary development:**

- Modern literary form of Bengali took shape in the 19th and early 20th centuries, rooted in the **west-central dialect spoken in the Nadia region.**
- The vocabulary of modern Bengali is influenced by *Magadhi Prakrit, Pali, Sanskrit, and borrowings from Persian, Arabic, Austroasiatic languages,* and other historical linguistic interactions.
- Contributions to literature:**
  - Christian missionaries played a role in the development of Bengali literature.
  - The **first Bengali book to be printed, 'Dom Antonio's Brahmin-Roman-Catholic-Sambad,'** emerged in the late 17th century.
  - Fort William College** witnessed the creation of textbooks by Bengali scholars, contributing to the growth of prose-writing.
  - Bankim Chandra Chatterjee:**
    - The best reminder of the Sannyasi Rebellion (1770-77) can be seen in the Bengali novels **Anandamath (1882) and Devi Chaudhurani (1884)** penned by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee
    - He is also renowned for writing the **first romantic Bengali novel, 'Durgeshnandini,' in 1865.**
    - He also contributed to the nationalist fervour through his composition, **'Vande Mataram,'**



which played a significant role in the Indian independence movement.

- Notable literary figures like Girishchandra Ghosh, Devendranath Tagore, Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar refined Bengali literature through their works.
- Rabindranath Tagore and Kazi Nazrul Islam emerged as prolific writers in the 20th century.
  - **Tagore, known for writing India's national anthem, 'Jana Gana Mana,' and Bangladesh's 'Amar Shonar Bangla,'** along with Nazrul Islam, celebrated as the national poet of Bangladesh, shaped the literary landscape of Bengal in the modern era.

#### **CLASSICAL LANGUAGE STATUS**

- The term '**Indian classical languages,**' or **Shastriya Bhasha**, encompasses languages in India with a rich history, significant antiquity, and a distinct literary heritage.
- The Republic of India officially **designated six languages as Classical languages.**
- The Indian government established criteria for conferring the status of a 'Classical Language,' **a decision implemented by the Ministry of Culture in collaboration with the Linguistic Experts' Committee.** This committee, formed by the government, **evaluates** requests for classifying languages as Classical Languages.
- **All the Classical Languages are listed in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution.**

**To be recognized as a 'Classical Language,' a language must satisfy the following criteria:**

- Demonstrated high antiquity of its early texts or a recorded history **spanning 1500–2000 years.**
- Possession of a body of **ancient literature or texts** considered valuable heritage by successive generations of speakers.
- Originality of the literary tradition, **not borrowed from another speech community.**
- Distinctiveness between the classical language and literature from its modern counterparts, **potentially involving a discontinuity.**

#### **LANGUAGES GRANTED CLASSICAL LANGUAGE STATUS:**

- **Tamil:**

- Tamil is predominantly spoken in the southern part of India.
- **Recognized as a classical language in 2004, Tamil boasts** a vibrant literary tradition spanning over two millennia, with Sangam literature being a notable collection of ancient Tamil works.

- **Sanskrit:**

- An ancient classical language in India, Sanskrit originated in the Vedic era.
- Officially recognized as a classical language on January 26, 2005, it holds sacred status in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism.
- Sanskrit is characterized by well-defined grammar, an extensive vocabulary, and has significantly influenced various Indian languages.

- **Telugu:**

- Widely spoken in the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh, Telugu achieved official **recognition as a classical language in India in 2008.**
- With ancient origins, Telugu poetry is renowned for its lyrical beauty, and its script is considered one of the oldest writing systems globally.

- **Kannada:**

- Serving as the official language of Karnataka, **Kannada has a history spanning over 2,000 years.**
- Officially recognized as a classical language in **India in 2008**, Kannada has been shaped by ancient poets like Pampa, Ranna, and Harihara, contributing significantly to its cultural heritage.
- The Kannada script, derived from the ancient Brahmi script, features unique characters.

- **Malayalam:**

- Primarily used in the state of Kerala in southern India, **Malayalam's history dates back to the ninth century.**
- **Recognized as a classical language in 2013**, it is believed to have evolved from Proto-Tamil-Malayalam and has made significant contributions to literature, art, and music.

- **Odia:**

- Spoken primarily in the state of Odisha, **Odia has origins dating back over 2,500 years, evolving from Prakrit and Sanskrit.**

- **Officially recognized as a classical language on February 20, 2014**, the Indian Government acknowledged its historical, literary, and cultural importance.

#### BENEFITS OF CLASSICAL STATUS

- Two **major international awards annually** for distinguished scholars in Classical Indian Languages.
- Establishment of a '**Centre of Excellence for Studies in Classical Languages.**'
- Requesting the University Grants Commission to initiate, initially in Central Universities, a **designated number of Professional Chairs for Classical Languages for eminent scholars** in Classical Indian Languages.

## HISTORY OF SOMNATH TEMPLE

#HERITAGEANDCULTURE #TEMPLESININDIA

PRIMARY SOURCE The Indian EXPRESS

*The Prime Minister of India is to inaugurate the Ram temple in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh on 22<sup>nd</sup> January. This brought back the memory of inauguration of Somnath temple, that was 73 years ago by the then President of India, Rajendra Prasad.*



#### MORE FROM THE NEWS ARTICLE

- **British Governor General Lord Ellenborough (1842-1844)** presented the temple as a symbol of Islam's excesses on Hindus.
- After British army was defeated in Afghanistan (1842) and faced heavy losses, a retaliatory strike was carried out.
- '**The gates of Somnath**', during this time became a major issue. A pair of sandalwood gates from Ghazni, were brought back by the British, claiming they were the original gates of Somnath taken by the invaders.
- *Lord Ellenborough proclaimed this as the avenging of an insult that Mahmud of Ghazni inflicted upon Hindus 800 years ago (1026).*
- The Nawab of Junagadh, where Somanath was located, decided to accede to Pakistan in August 1947. However, he fled when the rebellion started.
- **Sardar Patel**, the then Home Minister, visited Junagadh (Saurashtra region, Gujarat) and **announced the reconstruction of the Somnath temple.**
- As per the suggestion **given by Gandhiji, a trust was set up under K. M. Munshi for funding the project.** (The idea was, people of the country should collectively fund the project, instead of the Government, a secular entity).
- In **1951, the then President of India, Rajendra Prasad** was approached by K. M. Munshi for inauguration (**Pran-Pratistha**) of the temple.

#### ABOUT SOMNATH TEMPLE

- **Location:** Along the coastline in **Prabhas Patan, Veraval, Saurashtra region of Gujarat.**
  - **Veraval** was an ancient trading port.
  - During the **Indus Valley Civilisation**, the site of **Prabhas Patan** was occupied. After abandonment in 1200 BCE, it was **reoccupied in 400 BCE.**
- As per the temple's website, **it is the holy place of the first Aadi Jyotirlinga Shree Somnath Mahadev** and the sacred soil where Lord Krishna took his last journey.
- Since the ancient times, the site has been a pilgrimage site on account **of being a Triveni Sangam, i.e., the confluence of three rivers, Kapila, Hiran and Saraswati.**
- **Descriptions of the Temple:**
  - No mentions as 'Somnath nomenclature' have been found in ancient Sanskrit texts of Hinduism.
  - However, **mentions of 'Prabhas-Pattan' as tirtha (Pilgrimage site)**, where the temple is located is found.
  - **Raghuvamsa of Kalidasa (a 5<sup>th</sup> century poem)** mentions some of the sacred Shiva Pilgrimage sites:
    - *Banaras (Varanasi), Mahakal-Ujjain, Tryambaka, Prayaga, Pushkara, Gokarna and Somnath-Prabhasa.*

**HISTORY, HERITAGE & CULTURE**

- This clearly indicates tirthas of his time.
- **11<sup>th</sup> -century Persian historian Al-Biruni** has also stated that, *"Somnath has become so famous because, it was the harbour for seafaring people and a station for those who went to and fro between Sufala in the country of Zanj (east Africa) and China."*
- **14<sup>th</sup> century description was given by Amir Khusrow**, where he noted, *Gujarati Muslim pilgrims paid their respects before departing for Hajj Pilgrimage (Mecca, Saudi Arabia).*
- **Origin, Construction and Re-construction:**
  - First temple is said to have existed 2000 years ago.
  - **649 AD:** King Maitre of Vallabhini built a second temple.
  - Ruler of Sindh in 725, attacked and destroyed the temple.
  - **815:** Pratishtha King Nag Bhatt II constructed the temple for the third time, using Red Sandstone.
  - **1026:** Turkish ruler, **Mahmud of Ghazni** raided and plundered Somnath temple and destroyed it, **during the reign of Solanki King Bhimdev I.**
    - This raid is **confirmed by Al-Biruni**, who worked in court of Mahmud of Ghazni.
  - **King Bhimdev in between 1026-1042, rebuilt the temple for the fourth time.**
  - **Kumarapala of the Chaulukya-Solanki dynasty of Gujarat** (his capital was **Anahilapataka**) rebuilt the temple and studded it with jewels, as per the inscription of 1169.
  - **In 1299**, during the Gujarat invasion, **Allaudin Khilji's army, led by Ulugh khan**, sacked the temple after defeating Vaghela king Karna.
  - **1308: It was rebuilt by Mahipala I** (Chudasama king of Saurashtra) and the lingam in the temple was re-installed by his son Khengara.
    - Chudasama dynasty ruled the **part of present-day Saurashtra region of Gujarat**, sometime between the 9<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries.
    - **Capital:** Junagadh and Vamanasthali.
  - 1395: Attacked by Zafar khan.
    - Zafar Khan was the **last governor of Gujarat** under the Delhi Sultanate and **the founder of Gujarat Sultanate.**
  - 1451: Sacked by Mahmud Begada, the Sultan of Gujarat.
  - As per the book: *'Somanatha: the many voices 16<sup>th</sup> century'* by Romila Thapar, **Mughal ruler Akbar permitted the worship of Linga** in the temple and also appointed **Desai/officers to administer it.**
  - **1706:** Mughal ruler, **Aurangzeb again demolished the temple** and gradually the temple fell into disuse.
  - **1782:** Somnath temple was in dilapidated state *when Maratha queen from Indore, Ahilya bai Holkar built a small temple and placed an idol.*
    - Ahilyabai-built temple is now known as 'Old Somnath'.
  - After India's independence:
    - The present Somnath temple was reconstructed in the Maru-Gurjara style.

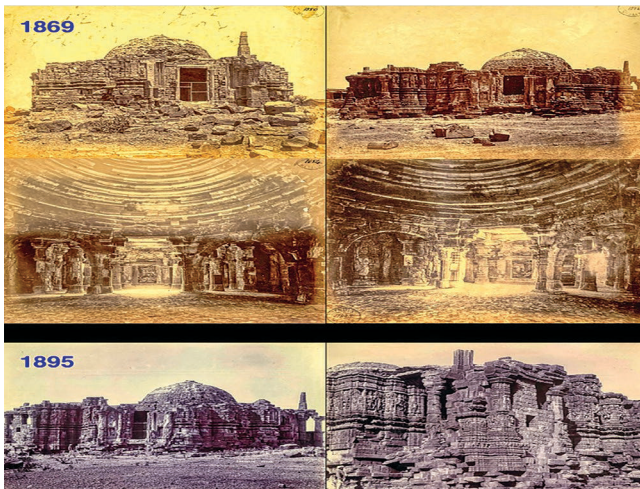
**MARU-GURJARA ARCHITECTURE OR SOLANKI STYLE**

- The style originated from that of the dynasties preceding the Solanki dynasty, **mainly the Gurjara-Pratihara dynasty.**
- Reached zenith from the **11<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, under the Chaulukya dynasty of Gujarat (Solanki dynasty).**
- Although originated as a regional style in Hindu temple architecture, **became popular in Jain temples.**
- **Features:**
  - Curvilinear Shikhara
  - Free standing Kirti Torana
  - Kunda or a temple tank
  - Heavy carvings on ceilings of Mandapa
  - High plinths
  - Balconies looking out on multiple side

**ARCHITECTURE OF THE TEMPLE**

- **Pre-11th century temple:** Remains of the foundation, the lower structure suggests an exquisitely carved temple. The garbhagriha (sanctum) was connected to a mukhamandapa (entrance hall). It opened to the east.





- **19th-century ruined Somnath temple:** British official and scholar, Alexander Burnes surveyed the site in 1830 and stated that the temple was converted into a Muslim structure (mosque) with arch.
- **Present temple:** Temple has a 'Kailash Maha Meru Prasad' form. The new temple is intricately carved, with pillared mandapa and 212 relief panels.

## MANY, NOT ONE RAMAYANA

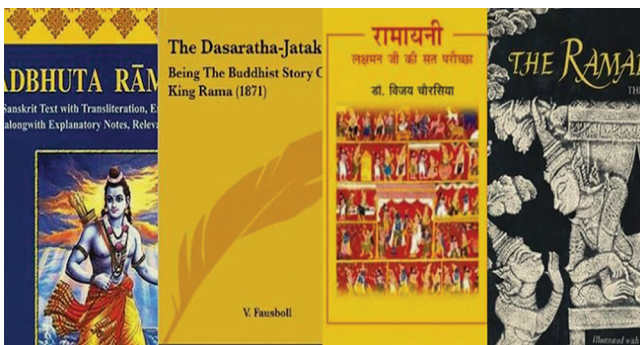
#HERITAGEANDCULTURE #ANCIENTTEXTS

#RELIGIONININDIA

PRIMARY  
SOURCE

The Indian  
EXPRESS

In Ganga River basin the pivotal Ramayana narrative is the **16th-century Ramcharitmanas of Goswami Tulsidas**, written in **Awadhi**, a dialect of Hindi. However, it is crucial to acknowledge the existence of numerous Ramayanas beyond the Hindi belt, crafted over the last 2,000 years, each deserving equal respect.



### INTRODUCTION

- Multiple versions of the Indian Hindu epic poem, the Ramayana, are known to exist.
- The oldest among them is widely acknowledged to be the **Sanskrit version known as the Mula Ramayana**, attributed to the sage Narada.
- Narada passed down this knowledge to **Valmiki**, who then authored the **Valmiki Ramayana**, which is currently considered the oldest available version of the epic.
- The core themes of the original Ramayana transcend linguistic boundaries, finding expression in diverse regional cultures and artistic forms.
- **Influences:**
  - Portrayal of the epic in **the Lkhaon Khmer dance theatre in Cambodia**.
  - **Ramanattam and Kathakali of Kerala**.
  - **Mappila Songs** of the Muslims in **Kerala and Lakshadweep**.
  - Indian dance tradition of **Yakshagana, Karnataka**.
  - Paintings adorning the walls of **Thailand's Wat Phra Kaew** palace temple.
  - In **Indonesia**, the Ramayana tales are reflected in traditional dance performances such as **Sendratari Ramayana and Kecak**.

### DIVERSE ADAPTATIONS OF THE RAMAYANA, EACH REFLECTING UNIQUE CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES

- **Andhra Pradesh:**
  - Sri Ranganatha Ramayanam by Gona Budda Reddy (1300-1310 CE).
  - **Srimadramayana Kalpavrikshamu** by **Sri Viswanadha Satyanarayana**, awarded the first **Jnanpith award in Telugu**.
- **Assam:** Assamese Saptakanda Ramayana by Madhava Kandali (14th century).
- **Bengal:**
  - **Krittivasi Ramayan** by Krittibas Ojha (15th century).
  - **Ramananda Ghosh's 18th-century translation depicted Rama as an avatar of Buddha;**
- **Odisha:**
  - The 15th-century **Odia Dandi Ramayana** mentions Ram enjoying mangoes provided by a tribal woman, later transforming into the widely known story of



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**HISTORY, HERITAGE & CULTURE**

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Shabari's berries in the **18th-century Bhakti-rasa-prabodhini**.

- **Bihar:**
  - Mithila Bhasha Ramayana by Chanda Jha.
  - Rameshwar Charit Mithila by Lal Das.
- **Gujarat:** Tulsi-Krta Ramayana, a Gujarati adaptation by Premanand Swami (17th century).
- **Karnataka:**
  - Kumudendu Ramayana (Jain version)
  - Ramachandra Charita Purana by Nagachandra (12th century).
- **Kerala:**
  - Ramacharitam, based on Yuddha Kanda, by Cheeraman (12th century);
  - **Mappila Ramayanam among the Muslims.**
- **Maharashtra:** Bhavartha Ramayana by Sant Eknath (16th century).
- **Uttar Pradesh (Awadh):** Ramcharitmanas by Goswami Tulsidas (16th century).
- **Tamil Nadu:**
  - **Kambaramayanam by poet Kampan (12th century)**, a popular Tamil version.
  - **7th-century Tamil songs of Alwar poet-saints** portray Ram playfully trying to straighten Manthara's humped back as a child.
- **Persian:** A Persian version commissioned by **Mughal emperor Akbar in 1558–1590, known as the Ramayana of Akbar.**
- **Urdu:** An Urdu version called the **Pothi Ramayana was written in 1776.**

**VERSIONS IN OTHER INDIAN RELIGIONS**

- **Jainism:**
  - **Paumachariyam**, a Jain version, asserts that all characters in the Ramayana were mere mortals.
  - Characters depicted as **Jains; Rama, Sita, and Lakshmana visit Jain pilgrimage sites.**
  - **Ravana is not** killed by Rama in the Jain version.
- **Buddhist Version of Ramayana:**
  - **Dasharatha was king of Benares**, not Ayodhya.

- This version does not feature Sita's kidnapping or the Ram-Ravan war.
- **Dasarata Jataka, notable for regarding Rama as a bodhisattva.**
- Characters in the Ramayana are considered mere mortals in conflict over moral issues.
- **Sikh Version:**
  - Mention of two sorts of Ramayana in the highest Sikh text.
  - **Spiritual Ramayana in Guru Granth Sahib**, where **Ravana represents ego, Sita represents intellect, Rama represents the inner Self, and Laxman represents attention.**
  - **Guru Granth Sahib acknowledges Dashavatara** as monarchs who restored order to the earth.
  - King Rama (Ramchandra) is mentioned, but no Guru authored a full Ramayana.

**VARIOUS VERSIONS OUTSIDE INDIA**

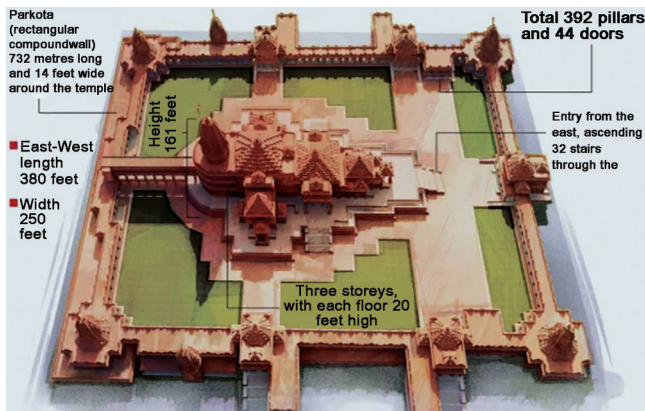
- **Japan:** Known as Ramaenna or Ramaensho.
- **Cambodia:** Reamker is the local adaptation.
- **Indonesia:** In Bali, there is Ramakavaca; Java features Kakawin Ramayana and Yogesvara Ramayana; Sumatra presents Ramayana Swarnadwipa.
- **Thailand:** The local version is called Ramakien.
- **Nepal:** Siddhi Ramayan (Nepal Bhasa) and Bhanubhaktako Ramayan (Nepali language).
- **Sri Lanka:** Known as Janakiharan.

## NAGARA STYLE OF TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE, IN WHICH RAM TEMPLE IS BEING BUILT

#TEMPLEARCHITECTURE #NAGARASTYLE

**PRIMARY  
SOURCE** *The Indian  
EXPRESS*

*The Ram temple to be inaugurated on 22<sup>nd</sup> January, has been designed in Nagara style of temple architecture. The temple is designed by Chandrakanta Sompura and his son Ashish Sompura.*



### RAM TEMPLE, AYODHYA

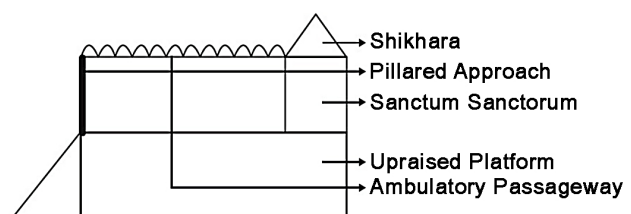
- The original design was given by **the Sompura family of Ahmedabad in 1988**. The Sompura family for at least 15 generations has contributed to temple designs of over 100 temples worldwide. **Example: Somnath Temple**
- In 2022, a new design was prepared by Sompuras, as per the Hindu texts, **Vastu Shastra & Shilpa Shastra**.
- The Ram mandir will be **250 feet wide, 380 feet long and 161 feet high**.
- Predominantly designed in the **Gurjara-Chaulukya (Maru-Gurjara) style of Nagara style of architecture**.
- Main structure will be built on a **raised platform with the three storeys**.
- The temple will have **five mandapas in the middle of the garbhagriha (sanctum sanctorum) and on the entrance passage**.
- It will consist a total of **366 columns and these columns will have 16 idols** each to include the incarnations of Shiva, the 10 Dashavataras, the 64 Chausath Yoginis, and the 12 incarnations of the goddess Saraswati.
- **Sandstone from Baansi in Rajasthan** will be used.
- **Iron will not be used** in the construction of the temple and **the fusion of stone blocks with copper plates** will be done.
- **Thailand is also symbolically contributing** to the inauguration of the temple, by sending soil to the Ram Janmabhoomi. Prior to this the country has also sent water from two rivers in Thailand to honour the temple.

### MARU-GURJARA ARCHITECTURE OR SOLANKI STYLE

- The style originated from that of the dynasties preceding the **Solanki dynasty, mainly the Gurjara-Pratihara dynasty**.
- Reached zenith from the **11th to 13th centuries, under the Chaulukya dynasty of Gujarat (Solanki dynasty)**.
- Although originated as a regional style in Hindu temple architecture, became popular in Jain temples.
- **Features:**
  - Curvilinear Shikhara
  - Free standing Kirti Torana
  - Kunda or a temple tank
  - Heavy carvings on ceilings of Mandapa
  - High plinths
  - Balconies looking out on multiple side

### ABOUT NAGARA STYLE OF TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE

- Emerged sometime in the **5<sup>th</sup> century CE, during the late Gupta period, in Northern India**.
- Seen in juxtaposition with the Dravida style of southern India, which too emerged in the same period.
- Nagara and Dravida may be called 'Styles', but they cover vast areas and time spans.
- Different sub-schools emerged in **western, central and eastern parts of the country**.

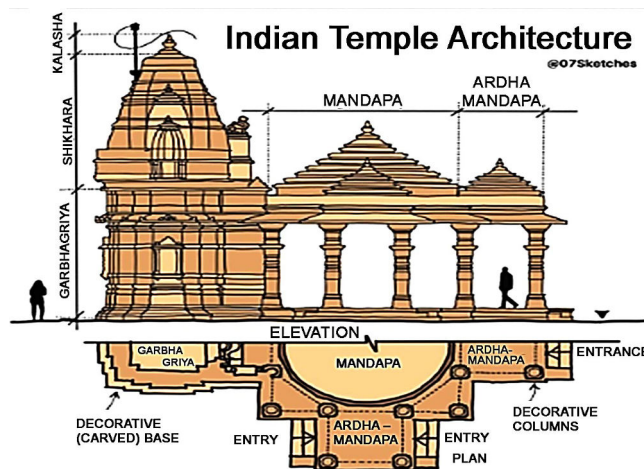


### FEATURES

- **Panchayatana style of temple making:** Consisting of **subsidiary shrines laid out in a crucified ground plan** with respect to the **principal shrine**.
- **Garbha griha (sanctum sanctorum):** Idol of the deity is placed and **is most sacred part of the temple**. Images of the river goddesses, Ganga and Yamuna, are placed outside the garbhagriha.
- **Assembly halls or mandaps**, in front of the principal shrine.

## HISTORY, HERITAGE & CULTURE

- Unlike Dravida temples, **water tanks or reservoirs are not present in the temple premises.**
- Built on **upraised platforms.**
- **Shikharas:** These are human-made representations of the **natural and cosmological order**, as imagined in Hindu tradition.
  - Depending on the period and geography, there is a large variation in what a shikhara looks like, or how it is used in a temple's design. **Types of Shikharas:**
    - **Latina or rekha-prasad:** Square at the base and the walls curve inward to a point on the top.
    - **Phamsana:** Broader base and were shorter in height than the Latina ones; Slope upwards on a straight line.
    - **Valabhi:** Rectangular base with the roof rising into vaulted chambers; Emerged in the Gupta heartland.
    - **Bhumija:** Miniature spires, in horizontal and vertical rows; Created a grid-like effect on each face.



- **Amalaka (horizontal fluted disc):** At the vertical end of the shikhara.
- **Kalash:** In spherical shape on top.
- **Vertical planes:**
  - Triratha temples.
  - Later, pancharatha, saptaratha and even navaratha temples came into existence.
  - Used as **different panels to make narrative sculptures.**
- **Covered Ambulatory passageway (pradakshina path):** Around the sanctum sanctorum.

- Temple premises **did not have elaborate boundary walls or gateways.**

### REGIONAL VARIATIONS AND SCHOOLS OF NAGARA STYLE

#### 1. Central India/ Khajuraho school or Chandela School:

- The Chandelas in the centre of India around **1000 AD created this style of temple construction known as the Khajuraho School or Chandela School.**
- It is made of sandstone.
- Generally north or east facing.
- These are relatively modest-looking shrines each **having four pillars that support a small mandapa** which looks like a simple square porch-like extension before an equally small room that served as the garbhagriha.
- This temple is in the **panchatana style.**
- The presence of this **curving latina or rekha-prasada type** of shikhara also makes it clear that this is an early example of a classic nagara style of temple.
- **Examples:** Khajuraho, Kandariya Mahadeo temple, in Madhya Pradesh

#### 2. Western India/Solanki Style:

There are two schools that developed in Gujarat & Rajasthan **these are Solanki school in Gujarat and Jain Temples in Mount Abu.**

- **Gujarat School:**
  - The stone used to build the temples ranges in colour and type with sandstone being most common construction material employed.
  - **Presence of hundred-square-metre rectangular pond(suryakund).**
  - A huge ornamental **arch-torana leads one to the sabha mandapa (the assembly hall)** which is open on all sides.
  - **Example: Sun temple, Modhera, Gujarat**
- **Rajasthan School:**
  - **Use of white marble.**
  - The walls of the central small shrine are devoid of carving and are left plain as the temple faces the east.
  - The ornamental detail spreading over the minutely carved ceilings, doorways, pillars, and panels.
  - **Example: Dilwara Temple, Mount Abu**

### **3. East India School:**

There are three schools that developed in east India these are **Assam, Bengal and Odisha School.**

- **Assam School:**

- It appears that **terracotta was the main medium of construction.** The temple consists of **four chambers:**
  - **garbhagriha and,**
  - **three mandapas locally called Calanta, Pancaratna and Nata mandira.**
- The style that came with the **migration of the Tais from Upper Burma mixed with the dominant Pala style of Bengal** and led to the creation of the **Ahom style in and around Guwahati.**

- **Bengal School:**

- Bengal witnessed a temple building **spree from the late 15th century.**
- Temple architecture in Bengal **got inspired from the double-roofed (dochala) or four-roofed (chauchala) structure of thatched huts in villages,** which housed local deities.
  - **Dochala (two-roofed style)**
  - **Chauchala (four-roofed style)**
- Temples were usually built on a **square platform.**
- Interior of the temples were relatively plain, **but the outer walls of these temples were decorated with paintings, ornamental tiles or teracotta tablets.**
- In Vishnupur group of temples in Bankura district of West Bengal, such decorations reached a high degree of excellence.
- This style also **incorporated elements of the dome and multilobe arch of Islamic architecture.**
- Elements of Bengal Temple architecture were adopted outside Bengal as well.

- **Odisha School:**

- The style consists of **three distinct types of temples: Rekha Deula, Pidha Deula and Khakhara Deula.**
- The former two are associated with Vishnu, Surya and Shiva temples while the third is mainly with Chamunda and Durga temples.
- **Also known as Kalinga School**

- The main architectural features of Odisha temples are classified in three orders, i.e., **rekhapida, pidhadeul and khakra.**
- The Architecture, basically a temple is made in **two parts, a tower and a hall.**
- The **tower is called deula and hall is called Jagmohan.**
- The walls of both the deula and the Jagmohan are lavishly sculpted with architectural motifs and a profusion of figures.
- The **most repeated form is the horseshoe shape,** which has come from the earliest times, starting with the large windows of the chaitya-grihas. **It is deul or deula which makes three distinct types of temples in Kalinga Architecture.**
- These temples usually have boundary walls.

### **6.Hills School:**

There are two schools that developed in Himalayan region of India these are **Kumaon, Himachal Pradesh and Kashmir School.**

- **Kumaon School:**

- The central tower surrounded by four smaller towers on each side.
- The main entrance is located at the front of the central tower, while several other entrances are located at each of its sides.
- These entrances are all decorated with intricate carvings depicting various scenes from mythology.
- The main entrance faces east
- The main temple complex includes four large halls or mandapas.
- **Jageshwar near Almora, Uttarakhand**

- **Himachal School:**

- Wooden buildings
- Its looks like a hut, and intricately carved wooden entrance, interior and ceiling.
- **Laksna Devi Mandir, Himachal Pradesh**

- **Kashmir School:**

- Wooden buildings with pitched roofs.
- The main garbhagriha and shikhara are made in a rekha-prasada or latina style, the mandapa is of an older form of wooden architecture.



## HISTORY, HERITAGE &amp; CULTURE

- Pandrethan temple is built on a plinth built in the middle of a tank.
- The temple is moderately ornamented.
- **Pandrethan temple or Pani Mandir, Badami bagh, Srinagar**

## PALAEOLITHIC TOOL DISCOVERY ADDS TO UNDERSTANDING OF HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

#PREHISTORY#HUMAN CIVILISATION

#ANCIENT INDIA

PRIMARY  
SOURCEARCHAEOLOGICAL  
SURVEY OF INDIA

*The recent floods in Telangana's Mulugu district have unveiled a significant discovery of Paleolithic quartzite tools, specifically hand axes. The find, dating back approximately 30 lakh years to the Lower Paleolithic period, challenges existing knowledge about human habitation in Telangana and central India.*

### MORE ABOUT THE NEWS

- The identified tools were characterized by their chipping style, material, and size, consistent with the methods of **Paleolithic hunter-gatherers**.
- These heavy quartzite tools, similar to those discovered globally, were utilized for **cutting wood and hunting animals for sustenance**.
- The historical context includes the 1863 discovery by the East India Company's Geological Survey team at **Attirampakkam near Madras (present-day Chennai)**, revealing **bifacial hand-axes dating back 15 lakh years**.
  - This Paleolithic culture has been termed **the Madras Hand-Axe Industry or Madrasian Culture**, contributing to our understanding of early human activities.

### STONE TOOLS

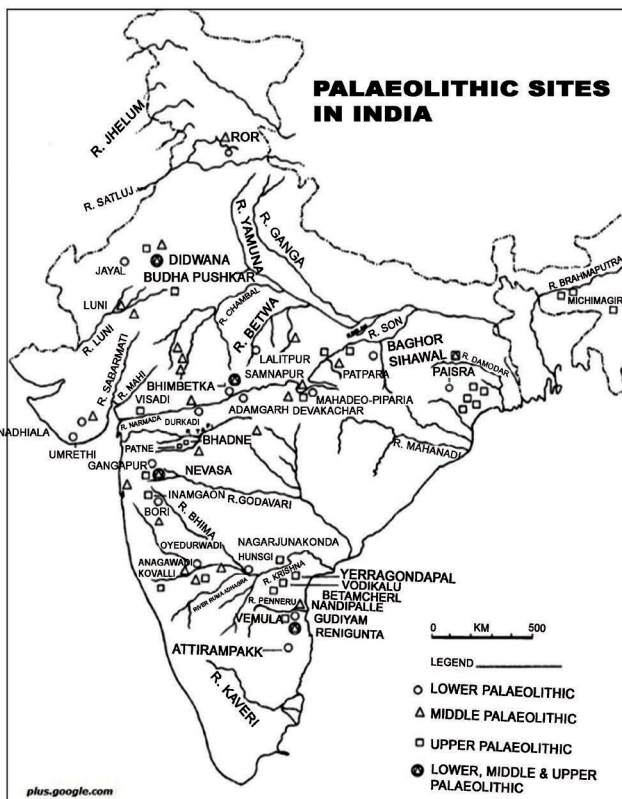
- Stone tools serve as the primary archaeological evidence that **allows us to gain insights into the lifeways of prehistoric peoples**.
- When a sizable rock is intentionally fractured into two or more pieces, the **largest fragment is termed the core**, and the **resulting tool is referred to as a core tool**.
- The smaller fragments detached from the original rock are known as **flakes**, and tools crafted from these flakes are termed **flake tools**.

### PREHISTORY

- In 1859 primitive stone implements were discovered alongside fossilized bones of extinct wild cattle and other large mammals in northern Europe.
- This revelation indicated that humans had inhabited northern Europe long before its landscape assumed its current configuration, leading to an extended period preceding recorded human history.
- **Sir John Lubbock, in his 1865 book 'Prehistoric Times,'** formally announced the birth of a **new scientific discipline known as Prehistory**. He categorized the Stone Age into the **Palaeolithic (Old Stone Age) and Neolithic (New Stone Age)**.
- By the late **19th century, an intermediate stage, the Mesolithic**, was introduced between the Palaeolithic and the Neolithic.
- Additionally, the **cultural sequence derived from cave and open-air sites in France** led to the recognition of three phases within the **Palaeolithic phase: Lower, Middle, and Upper**.

### GEOGRAPHICAL SETTINGS IN INDIAN SUBCONTINENT

- The Indian landscape possessed all the essential conditions for a successful hunting-gathering lifestyle:
  - *diverse landforms* facilitating the movement of such groups,
  - the presence of *various basic rocks and siliceous stones* suitable for toolmaking,
  - *perennial water bodies* in the form of streams and springs, and a rich variety of wild plant and animal foods.
  - *Except for the Himalayan tract and the Indo-Gangetic alluvial tracts*, Stone Age groups occupied the entire Indian landmass.



### **PALAEO LITHIC PHASE IN INDIA**

- The Indian Palaeolithic is categorized into three distinct developmental stages:
  - **Lower Palaeolithic:** 600,000 years BP to 150,000 years BP
  - **Middle Palaeolithic:** 165,000 BP to 31,000 years BP
  - **Upper Palaeolithic:** 40,000 years BP to 12,000 years BP
- Lower Palaeolithic practices involve the utilization of *large pebbles or flakes for crafting tools* such as choppers, chopping tools, hand-axes, cleavers, knives, and more.
- Moving into the Middle Palaeolithic, *the focus shifts to the use of a diverse range of flakes struck from cores* to create tools like scrapers, points, borers, and others.
- The Upper Palaeolithic stage introduces *further advancements*, with implement types like blunted and penknife blades, blades featuring serrated edges, and arrow points crafted on *long parallel-sided blades struck in a series from cylindrical cores using the punch technique*.

### **LOWER PALAEO LITHIC PHASE**



### **COMPRISES TWO PRIMARY TOOL-MAKING OR CULTURAL TRADITIONS**

#### **1. Soanian tradition:**

- Part of the East and Southeast Asian chopper-chopping tool tradition.
- Through field studies, they identified a series of five terraces on the **Soan River, part of the Indus drainage system**.
- Tools from this tradition include pebbles with working edges on their sides or ends, obtained by flaking from one or both surfaces, producing choppers or chopping tools.
- Pebble tool assemblages were found on the **Indian side of the border in the Sirsa and Ghaggar valleys of Haryana, Beas and Banganga valleys of Himachal Pradesh, and the Hoshiarpur-Chandigarh sector of the Siwalik Frontal Range**.

#### **2. Acheulian Cultural tradition:**

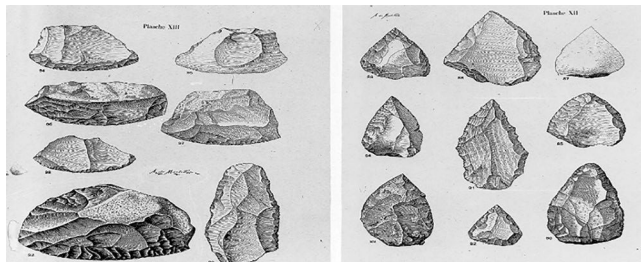
- **Hand-axes and cleavers**, represented advanced and increasingly symmetrical shapes.
- **Quartzite** was the preferred rock for tool-making, but in areas where it was not naturally available, Acheulian groups utilized other rocks such as **limestone in the Bhima basin, dolerite and basalt in Maharashtra, and fossil wood in Bihar and Bengal**.
- Techniques like stone hammer, soft hammer, and prepared core methods were employed to detach flakes and shape them into implements.

### **KEY LOWER PALAEO LITHIC SITES**

- **Singi Talav in western Rajasthan**
- **Rock shelter III F-23 at Bhimbetka in Madhya Pradesh**, providing Acheulian, Middle and Upper Palaeolithic, and Mesolithic levels.

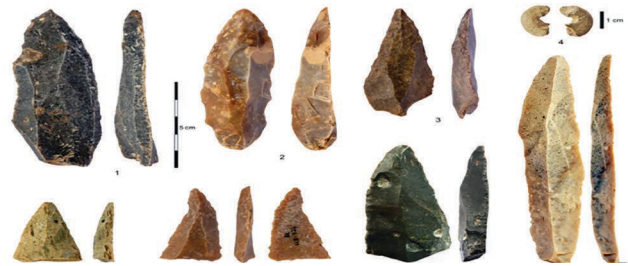
- **Adamgarh in Madhya Pradesh**
- **Paisra in Munger district, Bihar.** The excavation exposed hut-like dwelling structures and a circular arrangement of stone blocks.
- **Chirki-Nevasa in Maharashtra,** yielding dolerite artifacts along with fossil bones of wild cattle and other animals.
- **Morgaon, a site in the Deccan basalt landscape in the Bhima drainage basin**
- **Hunsgi in north Karnataka.**
- **Attirampakkam in Tamil Nadu,** an in situ Acheulian site recently dated to 1.5 million years BP by advanced scientific techniques.

#### **MIDDLE PALAEOOLITHIC PHASE**



- Middle Palaeolithic culture encompasses a diverse array of tools crafted from flakes, produced through **specialized techniques, earning it the designation of a flake tool industry.**
- This culture is associated with the **extinct Homo neanderthalensis**, commonly known as **Neanderthal man, who lived during the Upper Pleistocene period.**
- **Middle Palaeolithic tools in India are fashioned from flakes and flake-blades.**
- Tool types include various scrapers, awls, borers, unilateral or bilateral points, miniature handaxes and cleavers, and utilized flakes.
- Manufacturing sites also reveal the **presence of hammers.**
- **Middle Palaeolithic sites are distributed across the Indian subcontinent. Notable sites include:**
  - **Didwana** in Rajasthan, **Hiran valley** in Gujarat, **Potwar Plateau** between the Indus and Jhelum rivers, **Budha Pushkar** in Rajasthan, **Luni river system** (indicating tool industries west of the Aravallis), **Chirki Nevasa** in Maharashtra, and **Kalpi** in Uttar Pradesh.

#### **UPPER PALAEOOLITHIC PHASE**



- The Upper Palaeolithic marks the **final phase of the Palaeolithic era** and stands out as a **period of significant human achievements.**
- **The Anatomically Modern Homo sapiens (AMHS),** the only surviving human species, is associated with this cultural phase, encompassing our own species.
- **Technologically, the Upper Palaeolithic is characterized by advancements** in stone tool manufacture, particularly the **production of parallel-sided blades.**
  - These blades, refined and elongated in shape with parallel sides, are created through the prismatic-core technique or fluted-core technique.
  - Blades are produced by striking along the circumference of the core, resulting in a series of blades removed by indirect percussion.
  - Subsequently, these blades are further worked and finished through **a process known as backing, resulting in tools termed backed blade tools.**
- In the Indian context, Upper Palaeolithic cultural relics are primarily stone tools based on **blade-tool technology.**
- **As most of these sites are open-air occupations,** tools made of organic materials like **bone are scarce due to disintegration in open-air conditions.**
- Bone tools, however, were discovered in the **Kurnool caves (Andhra Pradesh), where favourable preservation conditions existed.**
- Prominent Upper Palaeolithic sites in the Indian subcontinent include **Chopani Mando** in Belan valley, **Baghor** in Madhya Pradesh, **Paisra** in Munger district of Bihar, **Haora and Khowai** river valleys in western Tripura, **Kurnool** in Andhra Pradesh, **Muchchatla Chintamanu Gavi** in Andhra Pradesh, and **Renugunta in Chittor district** of Andhra Pradesh.
- **Bone tool industries of the Upper Palaeolithic phase:**

- These are known from the **Kurnool cave sites in Andhra Pradesh**, revealing a variety of tools such as awls, barbed and un-barbed arrowheads, daggers, scraper-knives, scrapers, chisels, gouges, wedges, axe heads, and sockets
- **These bone tools exhibit a crude technology, reflecting the short-term nature of cave occupations.**
- Subsequent excavations in the **Muchchatla Chintamanu Gavi cave** have revealed blade tools and bone tools, showcasing the technological diversity of this cultural phase.

## THIRUVALLUVAR

#ANCIENTHISTORY #SANGAMAGE

PRIMARY SOURCE THE HINDU

*The Governor of Tamil Nadu paid tributes to a portrait of Tamil poet saint 'Thiruvalluvar' in saffron robes and described him as a saint of the 'Bharatiya Sanatan' tradition. This has revived a controversy, opposing the attempt to 'saffronise' Thiruvalluvar.*

### ABOUT THIRUVALLUVAR

- Valluvar was an ancient saint, poet, and prominent philosopher **in the Tamil region**, and his significant contributions are **particularly evident in his work, 'Thirukurral.'**



- **Comprising 1330 couplets**, this collection holds a special place in every Tamil household. According to traditional accounts, **it was the last work of the third Sangam.**

#### Note:

*The Three Sangam Councils: **These councils were held in the Pandian Kingdom.***

- 1. First Sangam was held in Madurai** and was attended by legendary sages. No book or literary work of this Sangam is available. **Sage Agastya is believed to have chaired the first Sangam.**

### 2. Second Sangam was convened in Kapadapuram.

The only surviving literary work is **Tolkappiyam by Tolkappiyar.**

### 3. Third Sangam was held in Madurai.

The literary works from this Sangam provide useful sources to reconstruct the history of Sangam period.

- Various communities in Tamil region regard **Valluvar as the 64th Nayanmar of the Saivite tradition.**
  - The renowned **Mylapore temple, constructed in the early 16th century**, stands as a testament to the deep reverence for Valluvar.
  - The **temple is situated within the Ekambareeswara-Kamakshi (Shiva-Parvati) temple complex in Mylapore, Chennai.**
- Valluvar's influenced and shaped the perspectives of numerous scholars and he had presented views *on ethical, social, political, philosophical, spiritual and economic domains.*
- Authentic information about Valluvar's life remains scarce as *neither his true name nor the original title can be found in Tirukkural.*
  - The earliest known textual reference to the legend of Valluvar is found in the **Shaivite Tamil text Tiruvalluva Maalai.**
- **Religious affiliation:**
  - It is a subject of debate, with conjectures placing him **within either Jainism or Hinduism.**
  - Some scholars argue that **Valluvar's writings align more closely with Hinduism**, as evidenced by the integration of his teachings in **Tirukkural with Hindu texts.**
  - Also, Valluvar's treatment of the concept of *ahimsa (non-violence)*, which is an important tenet in both *Jainism and Hinduism*, further supports the claim.

### ABOUT TIRUKKURAL

- It is divided into **three parts: aram (virtue), porul (wealth), and inbam (love).**
- Valluvar text predominantly addresses the **three aspects directly** but it does not explicitly **cover vitu (moksha or release).**
  - **The concept of turavaram (renunciation)** is explored, serving as a means to achieve spiritual liberation.



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**HISTORY, HERITAGE & CULTURE**

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- Hence, **vitru** is indirectly discussed within the **Kural text**.
  - The couplets organized into **133 sections, each containing 10 couplets**.
    - **Book I (Aram)**: Deals with the **moral values** of an individual and essentials of yoga philosophy.
    - **Book II (Porul)**: Explores **socio-economic values, polity and statecraft, and administration**.
    - **Book III (Inbam)**: Addresses psychological values and the theme of love.
  - Valluvar presents his theory of the state through **six key elements: Army (Patai), Subjects (Kuti), Treasure (Kul), Ministers (Amaiccu), Allies (Natpu), and Forts (Aran)**.
    - Valluvar recommends the establishment of forts and other infrastructure, along with adequate supplies and food storage, in preparation for potential sieges.
  - While sharing similarities with the teachings found in Arthashastra, **Valluvar's perspectives differ in some crucial aspects**.
    - **Example**: Valluvar's theory of the state, *the army (patai) emerges as the most vital element, in contrast to Kautilya's emphasis on King*.
- PHILOSOPHY**
- Contrary to being a mystic or purely philosophical document, Tirukkural is centred on the comprehensive understanding of human relationships and is **renowned for its concept of 'Pragmatic idealism.'**
  - Valluvar's philosophy places the **'common man' at its core**, emphasizing the need for individuals to lead virtuous lives, uphold human values, promote social harmony and actively engage in political life.
  - **On Religion and Spirituality:**
    - He glorifies significant divine attributes without specifying a particular deity by name.
    - This approach leads people to perceive the teachings in the **Kural text as not being attributed to any specific God or religion**.
    - He envisioned a harmonious society where diverse communities from various sects coexist peacefully, **thus advocating for a monotheistic divinity**.
  - He intentionally avoided **discussing moksha or liberation** and emphasized on the importance of **living a virtuous and honest life on Earth**.
  - He believes that individuals who exhibit *virtue in their domestic, social, political, and moral spheres will experience abundant joy in all aspects of life*.
  - **On Administration and Governance:**
    - **Democracy**: He **did not endorse democracy but accepted Royalty** with ministers bound by a **code of ethics and a system of justice**.
    - At the same time, the Kural text, **cautions against tyranny, appeasement, and oppression**, suggesting that **such behaviour leads to disasters, depletion of state wealth, and the loss of power and prosperity**.
    - **Governance:**
      - He asserts that *"just as living beings thrive with good rainfall, citizens flourish when a king governs justly"*.
      - He advised **rulers to avoid cruelty**, as a lack of daily examination of wrongdoings and the absence of justice will lead to the downfall of the kingdom.
      - **He highlighted the ruler's duty to protect the realm from terrorism**, warning that a failure to control such threats will result in the loss of peace.
      - **Role of ministers is crucial**, as they are expected to assist in the smooth administration of the kingdom, **understanding the nature of undertakings and offering advice when necessary to the King**.
      - He underscored the necessity of **maintaining good relationships with neighbouring countries through envoys** for peaceful coexistence.
  - **On Business:**
    - He advocated for **eternal values and moral principles** which will govern the conduct of business leaders.

# JAGANNATH TEMPLE CORRIDOR

#HERITAGEANDCULTURE #TEMPLESININDIA

PRIMARY  
SOURCE

THE HINDU

Chief Minister of Odisha has launched the Shree Mandir Parikrama Prakalpa, which is a massive peripheral development project around Puri's 12<sup>th</sup> century Shree Jagannath Temple.

## MORE ABOUT THE NEWS

- **Heritage Corridor:** 75-metre-wide space encircling the temple, known as the heritage corridor is divided into nine different zones.
- It has a 7-metre green buffer zone, adjacent to the **Meghanada Pachari**, or the boundary of the temple.
- A 10-metre **Antar Pradakshina** will allow space for ceremonial processions of the deities throughout the year.
- There is also a public convenience zone having restrooms, drinking water facilities, information-cum-donation kiosks, mini cloakrooms, and a dedicated emergency lane.
- The State government organised a massive outreach programme, with Arpan Rathis taken out in every village to promote, preserve and protect Jagannath culture through people's participation.



## ABOUT JAGANNATH TEMPLE

- An important Hindu temple dedicated to Jagannath, a form of Vishnu.
- **Location:** Puri, Odisha (eastern coast of India).
- **Jagannath, Subhadra and Balabhadra** are deities worshipped at the temple.
- The temple is sacred to all Hindus, and **especially in those of the Vaishnava traditions and is one of the 108 Abhimana Kshethram** of the Vaishnavite tradition.
  - Many great **Vaishnava** saints, such as **Ramanujacharya, Nimarkacharya, Vallabhacharya and Ramananda** were closely associated with the temple.
  - **Ramanuja** established the **Emar Matha** in the south-eastern corner of the temple.
  - **Adi Shankaracharya** established the **Govardhan Math**, which is the seat of one of the four **Shankaracharyas**.
  - It is also of particular significance to the followers of **Gaudiya Vaishnavism**, whose founder, **Chaitanya Mahaprabhu**, was attracted to the deity, Jagannath.
- The worship is performed by the **Bhil Sabar tribal priests, as well as priests of other communities in the temple**.
- Unlike the stone and metal icons found in most Hindu temples, **the image of Jagannath is made of wood (neem wood, known as Daru) and is ceremoniously replaced every 12 or 19 years by an exact replica**.
- The temple is one of the **Char Dham pilgrimage sites, the other being Rameshwaram, Badrinath and Dwarka**.
- **Construction:**
  - The present temple was rebuilt by the **King of the Eastern Ganga dynasty, Anantavarman Chodaganga**, in the 10<sup>th</sup> century CE, as described by the **Kendupatna copper-plate inscription of his descendant, Narasimhadeva II**.
  - **Anantavarman was originally a Shaivite, and became a Vaishnavite** sometime after he conquered the Utkala region, in which the temple is located, in 1112 CE.
  - A 1134-1135 CE inscription records his donation to the temple.
  - The temple complex was further developed during the reigns of **the subsequent kings, including those of the Ganga dynasty and the Gajapati dynasty (1434-1541)**.
  - **The temple is built in the Kalinga Architecture.** The temple has **distinct sectional structures:**

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**HISTORY, HERITAGE & CULTURE**

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**Deula, Vimana or Garbhagriha (sanctum sanctorum).**

- **Rath Yatra:**

- **The Ratha Yatra, also known as the Ratha Jatra or chariot festival**, is a magnificent Hindu celebration held annually in the city of Puri, Odisha, India.
- It is considered the oldest and largest chariot festival in the Hindu tradition, taking place during the bright half of the lunar month of Ashadh (June or July).
- The festival revolves around the worship of Lord Jagannath, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu or Krishna, and his siblings Balabhadra and Subhadra.
- During the Ratha Yatra, the three deities are ceremoniously pulled in massive wooden chariots from the **Jagannath Temple to the Gundicha Temple**.
- The deities reside in the **Gundicha Temple for a week and then return to their abode in the Jagannath temple (Bahuda Yatra)**.

## **EASTERN GANGA DYNASTY**

### **INTRODUCTION**

- The Eastern Ganga dynasty (Purba Gangas, Rudhi Gangas, or Prachya Gangas) held dominion over **Kalinga from the 5<sup>th</sup> century to the mid-20th century**.
- They ruled over the modern region of Odisha unfolded in **three distinct phases: Early Eastern Gangas (493–1077), Imperial Eastern Gangas (1077–1436), and Khemundi Gangas (1436–1947)**.
- The nomenclature '**Eastern Gangas**' was adopted to differentiate them from the Western Gangas, who governed Karnataka (Mysore).
- They ruled over the entire contemporary **Indian state of Odisha, substantial portions of north Andhra Pradesh, segments of Chhattisgarh, and select southern districts of West Bengal**.
- **Odia became the official court language** which evolved from Odra Prakrit.

### **ABOUT THE RULE**

- Earliest capital was **Dantapuram**, which was shifted to **Kalinganagara (modern Mukhalingam)**, then to

**Kataka (modern Cuttack), and finally to Paralakhemundi.**

- They are best known for monumental architectural contributions, notably the construction of the **renowned Jagannath Temple in Puri and the Konark Sun Temple in Odisha**.
- Following the decline of the **Mahameghavahana dynasty, the region of Kalinga underwent fragmentation** into various kingdoms under feudatory chiefs.
  - Following the decline of the Maurya Empire, the **Mahameghavahana dynasty emerged as an ancient ruling lineage in Kalinga region**. In the first century B.C., King Mahameghavahana successfully conquered both Kalinga and Kosala.
- Eastern Ganga dynasty was **first established when Indravarma-I defeated Vishnukundin king, Indrabhattaraka**.
  - Indravarma-I established his rule with **Kalinganagara (or Mukhalingam) as the primary capital and Dantapuram as a secondary capital**.
- After the decline of the early Eastern Gangas, the **Chalukyas of Vengi** assumed control of the region.
- At the end of **11<sup>th</sup> century, the Chodaganga dynasty emerged**, named after its founder, **Anantavarman Chodaganga**.
  - His father, Rajaraja Deva, was the ruler of the Kalinga kingdom (Southern Odisha and the northern Andhra coast).
  - Anantavarman ruled from the **Ganges River in the north to the Godavari River in the south and laid the groundwork for the Eastern Ganga Dynasty**.
- In 1198, Rajaraja III ascended the throne. **The Khalji dynasty of Bengal invaded Odisha** during his reign in 1206.
  - His son **Anangabhima III successfully repelled the invaders** and to mark the victory erected the **Megheswara Temple** at Bhuvaneshvara.
- **Narasimhadeva I, (son of Anangabhima)** launched a military campaign into southern Bengal in 1243 and defeated the **Muslim ruler of the Delhi Sultanate**.
  - He captured the **capital Gauda**.
  - Constructing **the Sun Temple at Konark** to commemorate victory.

## HISTORY, HERITAGE &amp; CULTURE

- The decline of the Eastern Gangas began after Narasimha's death in 1264.
- **Firuz Shah Tughlaq, the Sultan of Delhi**, invaded Odisha between 1353 and 1358 and **imposed tribute** on the Ganga king.
- In 1356, the **Musunuri Nayaks** defeated the Odishan powers.
- **Narasimha IV**, the last known king of the Eastern Ganga dynasty, ruled until 1425.

## BHOGALI BIHU

#FESTIVALSININDIA #ARTANDCULTURE

PRIMARY  
SOURCE THE HINDU

As part of Bhogali Bihu, a community fishing event was organised in the **Bamuni Lake in Guwahati, Assam**.



## ABOUT BHOGALI BIHU

- **Magh Bihu**, also known as **Bhogali Bihu** or **Maghar Domahi**, is a significant harvest festival celebrated in the north-eastern region of India, particularly in Assam.
- This festive occasion, occurring in the **month of Magh (January-February)**, serves as the culmination of the harvesting season.

- The festivities are marked by a combination of feasts and bonfires. Young individuals engage in the construction of **makeshift huts known as Meji and Bhelaghar**, fashioned from **bamboo, leaves, and thatch**.
- Traditional Assamese games, **including tekeli bhonga (pot-breaking) and buffalo fighting**, add a cultural flair to the celebrations.
- In contemporary times, Magh Bihu is observed on a single day, whereas *historically, the festival extended throughout the entire month of Magh*, thus giving it the name *Magh Bihu*.
- The eve before the festival, **known as 'Uruka'**, involves **people gathering around bonfires**, preparing meals, and enjoying merrymaking.
- In addition to the main Magh Bihu festivities, related celebrations **such as Sangken can be observed in Assam and Arunachal**.
- The **Kacharis, an indigenous Assamese community**, partake in similar customs.
- The **Khamti people**, observe a **Bonfire tradition related to Buddha**. This unique ritual, distinct from other Tai groups, suggests that the Khamtis likely adopted the practice from locals in the 18th century, evolving it into a Buddhist rite.

## ABOUT BAMUNI HILLS

- **Location:** Right bank of the **Brahmaputra River**.
- These hills are a tourist attraction for sculptural ruins and stone carvings.
- As per the **Archaeological Survey of India**, under whose control this area currently is, has fixed **the date of these ruins at 10th to 12th century A.D.**
- Although it is not clear as to who had this temple constructed, **it is generally believed that it was built during the rule of early Pala rulers**. The findings suggest that the **temple was a north Indian Nagara style**.
- The remains of the **subsidiary shrines at the four corners of the main central make it a Panchayatana temple complex**.

## HARVEST FESTIVALS IN INDIA

- **Ugadi, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana:** Ugadi is celebrated as the New Year's Day for the



people of these regions. It coincides with the first day of the Hindu lunisolar calendar month of Chaitra. Consumption of a special dish called Bevu Bella, symbolizes the sweet and bitter experiences of life.

- **Navanna, Odisha and West Bengal.**
- **Nuakhai, Odisha.**
- **Pongal, Tamil Nadu:** Pongal is a four-day-long festival to thank the Sun God for agricultural abundance. The festivities include boiling the first rice of the season and creating intricate Kolam designs.
- **Baisakhi, Sikh Harvest Festival, Punjab:** Celebrated on 13th or 14th April. Baisakhi is not only a harvest festival but also a religious one. It commemorates the formation of the Khalsa Panth of warriors under Guru Gobind Singh in 1699. Celebrated with folk dances like Bhangra and Gidda.
- **Onam, Kerala:** Onam is a 10-day festival celebrated to honour the mythical King Mahabali. The festival is known for its boat races, traditional dance forms like Kathakali and Thiruvathira, and the elaborate feast known as Onasadya. Floral carpets called Pookalam are laid out in homes to welcome the king.
- **Lohri, Punjab:** Lohri marks (13<sup>th</sup> January) the end of winter and is traditionally associated with the harvest of the rabi crops. It's a celebration of fertility and the spark of life.
- **Gudi Padwa, Maharashtra:** Gudi Padwa signifies the arrival of spring and the reaping of Rabi crops. It's celebrated by hoisting the Gudi, a bright cloth tied to the top of a long bamboo with sugar crystals, neem leaves, and a twig of mango leaves. It symbolizes victory and prosperity.
- **Gangaur, Rajasthan:** Gangaur is predominantly a women's festival, celebrated with great fervour, especially in Jaipur. It's dedicated to Gauri, a manifestation of Goddess Parvati.
- **Lossong, Sikkim:** It is celebrated welcome the Sikkimese New Year and also marks the celebration of the harvest period. It is celebrated by two tribes Bhutia and Lepchas. Traditional dances in a group are performed like Cham Dance and Black Hat Dance in monasteries.
- **Wangala, Meghalaya:** It is dedicated to the worship of goddess Saljong, who is believed to bless the crops. Wangala, a traditional dance is performed & people

relish traditional Garo cuisine & witness the flag-hoisting ceremony. It is also celebrated in Assam.

## BENOY K BEHL'S SHOW REVEALS THE HIDDEN GEMS OF THE AJANTA CAVES TO THE WORLD

#ARTANDCULTURE #MURALSININDIA

PRIMARY  
SOURCE THE HINDU

*Carved into a horseshoe-shaped cliff along the Waghora River in Maharashtra, the 29 Ajanta caves, hold a rich collection of rock-cut architecture and exquisite mural paintings. Benoy K Behl, a filmmaker, art historian, and photographer, illuminates these treasures in his ongoing exhibition, "Lost Ancient Art Revealed!" at the India International Centre (IIC).*

### ABOUT AJANTA CAVES

- Situated in **the Sahyadri ranges along the Waghora river near Aurangabad in Maharashtra**, Ajanta comprises a series of rock-cut caves.
- **Recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.**
- Of the total **29 caves, 25 served as Viharas or residential caves**, while the remaining **4 functioned as Chaitya or prayer halls**. All the 29 caves at Ajanta are associated with Buddhism.
- These caves were developed during the period spanning from **200 B.C. to 650 A.D.**
- Buddhist monks, supported by the **Vakataka kings, particularly notable among them being Harishena**, inscribed the Ajanta caves.
- The figures within these caves were **created using fresco painting, showcasing a remarkable level of naturalism.**
- The thematic focus of the paintings predominantly revolves around Buddhism, depicting scenes from the life of Buddha and Jataka stories.
- Among the **29 caves, five were developed during the Hinayana phase**, while the remaining **24 were created during the Mahayana phase of Buddhism.**
- The travel narratives of Chinese Buddhist travellers **Fa Hien (during the rule of Chandragupta II; 380-415 CE) and Hieun Tsang (during the reign of Emperor**

## HISTORY, HERITAGE & CULTURE

**Harshavardhana; 606-647 CE)** provide references to the Ajanta caves.

- **Notable sculptures from the Ajanta Caves include:**
  - Mahaparinirvana of Buddha in Cave No. 26.
  - Depiction of a Naga king and his consort in Cave No. 19.



### ABOUT AJANTA CAVE PAINTINGS

- The Ajanta Cave Paintings, among the oldest murals in the Indian subcontinent, were intricately **carved from volcanic rocks**.
- Notably, murals in **cave no. 9 and 10 belong to the Sunga period**, while the remaining caves **date back to the Gupta period**.

- Common themes range from Jataka stories to the life of Buddha, incorporating elaborate decorative patterns of flora and fauna. The walls are adorned with graceful poses of both humans and animals.
- The medium of painting involved the use of vegetable and mineral dyes, with red ochre outlining the figures and contours in shades of brown, black, or deep red.
- **Notable paintings at Ajanta include scenes from the Jataka stories depicting the Buddha's former lives as a bodhisattva and the life of Gautama Buddha.**
- **Cave 1 showcases paintings of various Bodhisattvas in a tribhanga pose, including Vajrapani, symbolizing Buddha's power, Manjusri as a manifestation of Buddha's wisdom, and Padmapani (Avalokitesvara) representing Buddha's compassion.**
- Additionally, **Cave 16 features the depiction of the Dying Princess**, while scenes from the **Shibi Jataka and Matri-Poshaka Jataka narratives** unfold in other caves, illustrating profound moral tales from ancient Indian folklore.

## PRACTICE QUESTIONS

### MCQS

#### Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. Recipients of Bharat Ratna awards should have achievements in the field of 'art, science, literature, and public service'.
2. The Statutes of 1954 did not allow granting of Bharat Ratna awards posthumously.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only                                      (b) 2 only  
(c) Both 1 and 2                              (d) Neither 1 nor 2

#### Q2. With reference to the 'Officially recognised Classical Languages' in India, consider the following statements:

1. Sanskrit was the first language to be conferred the status of Classical language by the Government of India.
2. Continuity between the classical language and its modern literature is an important criterion for obtaining official classical language status.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only                                      (b) 2 only  
(c) Both 1 and 2                              (d) Neither 1 nor 2

#### Q3. Consider the following statements:

1. Raghuvamsa, a 5th century poem by Kalidasa mentions Somnath as one of the tirthas.

2. The present-day Somnath temple was built in the Maru-Gurjara style of architecture.
3. 'Kirti Torana' and 'Kunda' are important features of Maru Gurjara style of temple architecture.

How many of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) Only one                      (b) Only two  
(c) All three                      (d) None

**Q4. Consider the following statements with reference to 'Tirukkural':**

1. The 'Porul' section of the Tirukkural discusses about statecraft and warfare.
2. The term 'Patai' in Tirukkural is associated with 'army'.
3. Tirukkural is attributed to Sangam era poet 'Tholkappiyam'.

How many of the statements given above is/are incorrect?

- (a) Only one                      (b) Only two  
(c) All three                      (d) None

**Q5. With reference to the Jagannath temple situated in Puri, consider the following statements:**

1. The temple is one of the 'Abhimana Kshethram' of the Vaishnavite tradition.
2. The present structure of the temple was first built by Narasimhadeva II of the Eastern Ganga dynasty.
3. The temple follows Kalinga architectural style.

How many of the above statements are incorrect?

- (a) Only one                      (b) Only two  
(c) All three                      (d) None

## DESCRIPTIVE QUESTIONS

- Q1.** Discuss the key features of Nagara style of temple architecture and the regional variations that have given rise to distinct schools within this architectural tradition.
- Q2.** Examine the significance of Palaeolithic sites found in the India in shedding light on Human settlements throughout different periods.

**Answers:** 1-b, 2-d, 3-c, 4-a, 5-a

## **PART TWO**

# **ETHICS, INTEGRITY & APTITUDE**

**Coverage from varied sources**



# INDIA RANKS 93<sup>RD</sup> IN CORRUPTION PERCEPTION INDEX

#ETHICS IN GOVERNANCE #CHALLENGE OF CORRUPTION

In the recently released **Corruption Perception Index report by Transparency International**, India has slipped in the rank to 93 in 2023 against 85<sup>th</sup> rank in 2022. According to World Bank, *Corruption is the abuse of public office for private gain, it covers a wide range of behavior, from bribery to theft of public funds.*

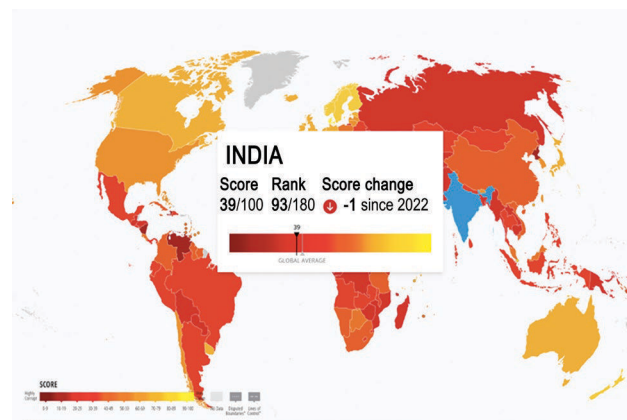
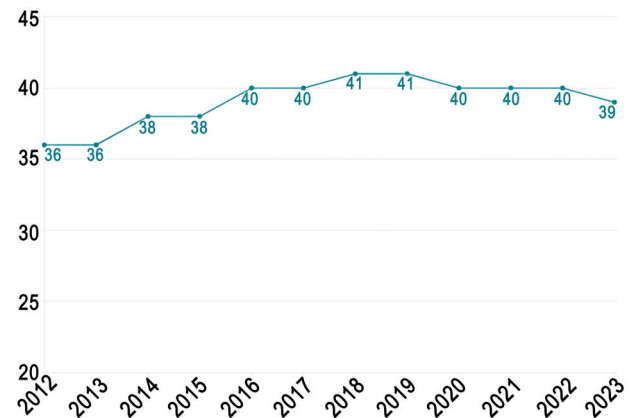
## KEY OBSERVATIONS BY CORRUPTION PERCEPTION INDEX

- **India's ranking has stagnated:** Corruption perception score has stagnated because of inadequate delivery on anti-corruption commitments.
- **Narrowing of civic space:** India has seen further narrowing of civic space, including through the passage of Telecommunication bill that could be a 'grave threat' to fundamental rights".
- **Lack of delivery on anti-corruption agenda:** Weak scores reflect the lack of delivery by elected officials on anti-corruption agendas, together with crackdowns on organised civil society.
- **Freedom of press:** Attacks on freedom of press, assembly and association is also reason for decreased oversight and consequent rise of corruption.

**Recommendations by the report:** To tackle corruption, promote justice and strengthen rule of law, Government should.

- **Strengthen independence of judicial system:** Promote merit-based appointment and protect judicial institutions from political interference.
- **Making justice delivery more transparent:** ensure that the data with respect to enforcement and administrative rules are openly available for better scrutiny by the public.
- **Ensuring integrity of administrators and prosecutors:** abuse can be prevented by dedicated whistleblowing and reporting mechanism.

India's Corruption Perception Index score  
2012 - 2023



## REASONS FOR BUREAUCRATIC CORRUPTION IN INDIA:

- **Individualistic reasons:**
  - **Low Salaries:** Limited income prompts civil servants to seek extra money through corruption to maintain their standard of living.
  - **Increased want:** Globalization has led to increased wants induced lavish lifestyles in society, this has led to the increase in corrupt means to acquire money.
  - **Social Norms:** Cultural acceptance or expectation of corruption can normalize unethical behavior. Scholars have pointed to the phenomena of 'Sanskritization of corruption' which highlights that since corrupt officers at higher echelons of governance engage in corruption, their actions are emulated by the lower bureaucracy.
- **Societal reasons:**

- **Colonial legacy:** Unresponsive authoritarianism increases the tendency to break laws, law is upheld because of fear and individuals think that if they can get away with breaking the law, they do.
- **Resource Scarcity:** Limited opportunities for advancement push individuals to resort to corruption for personal or familial well-being.
- **Socio economic inequalities:** One of the most significant differences between the countries at the top of index (least corrupt) and at the bottom is huge socio-economic inequalities and high degree of social and economic justice.
- **Legal & Administrative reasons:**
  - **Perceived System Inefficiency:** Corruption is seen as a shortcut to navigate through slow, inefficient bureaucratic processes.
  - **Lack of Accountability:** Weak enforcement and impunity lead bureaucrats to believe they can engage in corruption without consequences.
  - **Hierarchy and Patronage:** Loyalty to superiors and career advancement pressures make civil servants pliable and committed towards particular political parties rather than public service.
  - **Article 311:** Security of tenure and difficult removal process create obstacles for expeditious punitive actions against the civil servants.
  - **Prevention of Corruption Act:** Prior approval clause under Section 19 of Prevention of Corruption Act sometimes acts as hinderance in the anti-corruption drive.

#### **SUGGESTIONS WITH RESPECT TO REDUCING CORRUPTIONS:**

- **Individual level:**
  - **Personal Integrity:** Civil servants must uphold personal integrity and ethical behavior in all aspects of their lives, including their professional roles. Upholding moral values such as honesty, fairness, and accountability can serve as a powerful deterrent against corruption.
  - **Leading Ethical Lives:** Prioritize public good over personal gain and adhering to high moral standards, inspire trust and confidence in their leadership and help foster a culture of integrity within their organizations and institutions.
- **Social Level:**
  - **Encouraging Citizen Participation:** Empowering citizens to actively participate in governance

processes can help reduce corruption through promoting civic education, facilitating public consultations on policy decisions, and enabling **citizen monitoring of public services.**

- **Culture of Integrity:** Promote ethical standards and values within society can help prevent corruption at all levels by promoting integrity in education, business, and civil society, as well as raising awareness about the negative consequences of corruption for the nation.
- **Legal and administrative level:**
  - **Strengthening Anti-Corruption Laws:** Enforce robust anti-corruption laws that cover both public and private sectors. These laws should include provisions for transparency, accountability, and severe penalties for corruption-related offenses.
  - **Monopoly and discretion:** Monopoly and discretion have been cited as primary cause of corruption in India, while monopoly can be reduced by law, it requires high moral standards to self-regulate the unethical use discretion.
  - **Enhancing Transparency in Government:** Ensure greater transparency in government processes, decision-making, and expenditures through open data initiatives, public access to information laws, and mandatory disclosure of assets by public officials.
  - **Promoting Accountability:** Establishing independent oversight bodies, such as anti-corruption commissions /Lokpal offices, with the power to investigate and prosecute corruption cases. Currently, such institutions lack enthusiasm to act on the complaints against corruption. (Around 68% corruption complaints against public functionaries that landed with the Lokpal of India were "disposed off" without any action in the past four years.)
  - **Performance Evaluation:** Introduce objective performance evaluation systems that reward ethical conduct, efficiency, and service delivery. Recognize and promote individuals who demonstrate integrity and excellence in their work.
  - **Promoting Whistle-blower Protection:** Ensure comprehensive whistle-blower protection to safeguard individuals who report corruption from retaliation and ensure their anonymity and safety.

- **Strengthening values and Institutions:** Ethical values are needed to serve as guiding stars, they provide a sense of right and wrong, however values must be sustained by strong and incorruptible institutions.
- **Adhering to Nolan Committee principles:**
  1. **Selflessness:** Holders of public office should take decisions solely in terms of public interest. They should not do so to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends.
  2. **Integrity:** Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organizations that might influence them in the performance of their official duties.
  3. **Objectivity:** In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.
  4. **Accountability:** Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.
  5. **Openness:** Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.
  6. **Honesty:** Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.
  7. **Leadership:** Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.
- Enhance the Central Vigilance Commission's (CVC) role by granting it more independence, resources, and authority.
- Ensure the autonomy and effectiveness of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in handling corruption cases.
- **Reducing Discretion:**
  - Develop clear **Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)** for government processes to minimize officials' discretionary powers, thus reducing corruption and arbitrary decision-making.
  - Use technology and e-governance to reduce human interface and discretion in government transactions.
- **Police Reforms:**
  - Implement comprehensive police reforms to enhance the integrity, transparency, and professionalism of law enforcement agencies.
  - Promote community policing to foster trust between the police and the public, thus reducing corruption and abuse of power.
- **Promoting Ethical Governance:**
  - Establish a code of ethics for public officials and employees to promote ethical behavior.
  - Encourage government departments to adopt citizen charters to enhance accountability and improve public service delivery.
- **Public Awareness Campaigns:**
  - Utilize media and educational institutions to raise awareness about the negative effects of corruption and the importance of ethical conduct.
- **Parliamentary Oversight:**
  - Enhance the role of parliamentary committees in scrutinizing government operations and expenditure to detect and prevent corruption.
- **E-Governance and Digitalization:**
  - Undertake comprehensive digital transformation of government processes to reduce human intervention and opportunities for corruption.

Combating corruption in civil services is a long-term endeavour requiring sustained efforts across multiple fronts. It needs not only changes in policies and procedures but also fundamental shift in organizational culture towards integrity, transparency, and accountability.

## **SECOND ARC RECOMMENDATIONS WITH RESPECT TO STRENGTHENING ANTI-CORRUPTION MEASURES:**

- **Organizational changes:**
  - Amend the Whistle-blower Protection Act to provide better protection and incentives for whistle-blowers, including protection from harassment and financial rewards.

## CASE STUDIES FOR PRACTICE

MAINS GS PAPER IV

**Case Study 1:** The city of Vrindavan faced a challenge of an influx of elderly widows, seeking refuge in the overcrowded Ashrams with inadequate facilities. Traditionally, the widows would withdraw into a life of devotion and prayer, but the Ashrams were ill-equipped to cater to the health needs or the frailties of age. Many lived in poverty and lacked access to basic necessities.

Radha, the Mayor of Vrindavan, wanted to improve the living standards and healthcare for these women who were equal citizens. However, providing preferential treatment to one group raised concerns about fairness among other vulnerable populations. Moreover, any support given to the widows could be seen as endorsing outdated cultural practices that marginalized the women. Radha had to find the best course of action within her authority and available resources, while upholding the principles of equality, rights and dignity for all.

To address the issue, Radha formulated a plan to enhance essential services in the Ashrams through partnerships with charities and corporate donors, without utilizing the public funds. These improvements aimed to uplift the living conditions of the women already residing in the Ashrams. Simultaneously, a public education campaign would be launched to promote the idea that traditions evolve over time, and the widows had the choice to live with their families, or in regular housing if they preferred. However, some argued that any support provided would legitimise a system that should be abolished altogether. On the other hand, others believed that regardless of cultural practices, suffering must be relieved wherever it exists, through lawful and ethical means as a duty, and not as a privilege.

Radha firmly stood by the principle that governance could not overlook the harsh realities faced by any group and that injustices should be rectified through policies aligned with constitutional values. However, the complexity of the issue was apparent, with moral arguments presented from various perspectives. **(250 words)**

(a) If you were Radha, what would you see as the obligations and priorities in this issue?

- (b) What solution would you determine to be the most ethical?
- (c) What role do moral reasoning, empathy and ethics play in policymaking around complex challenges rooted in culture and values?

**ANS.**

**(a) The Obligations and priorities in the issue include**

- **Duty to relieve suffering** and uphold rights to dignity for all citizens, especially disadvantaged groups. Widows deserve essential care and facilities regardless of cultural practices.
- **Responsibility to allocate resources** and make policy in a fair, equitable manner without favouritism towards any one group. Equality is a guiding principle.
- **Need to reform systems** and practices that marginalise women through ethical means aligned with principles of justice and constitutional values. Simply abolishing a cultural institution may not remedy root inequities and could worsen hardship.

**(b) Most ethical solution**

Upgrade the living conditions and healthcare access in ashrams through partnerships without diverting public funds from other welfare schemes. This relieves immediate suffering for vulnerable widows already living there through lawful means but avoids claims of preferential treatment using state resources. It buys time to open dialogue on creating alternatives and changing mindsets.

**(c) Moral reasoning, empathy and ethics matter because**

- They allow us to identify root causes of suffering and determine just solutions.
- They guide us to fulfil principles of equality and justice through pragmatic means suited to situation. *Ethics point to possibility and harmony.*
- They allow us to make hard choices in a compassionate, impartial manner by considering the circumstances and interests of all affected.



**ETHICS, INTEGRITY & APTITUDE**

They shape solutions that transform challenges at their source through shared understanding and collaborative effort over time rather than imposing change through force of law alone. *Justice is cultivated, not delivered*

**Case Study 2:** Aanya cleared the prestigious Civil Services Examination and secured a position in the Ministry of Women and Child Development in her state. Driven by her eagerness to make a meaningful difference, she embarked on her new role with great enthusiasm. However, she soon encountered a disheartening reality. Upon joining the Ministry, she discovered that the senior officials were indifferent to her ideas for improving the implementation of crucial programmes. They were unwilling to provide the necessary data or grant her access to understand the ground realities.

Undeterred by this initial setback, Aanya devised a proactive approach to tackle the situation. She decided to conduct unannounced field visits to monitor the Anganwadi centres, where nutritious meals and healthcare services were provided to the young children and pregnant/lactating women. During these visits, she discovered that the centres had poor quality and expired food supplies, and the infrastructure posed hazards. Moreover, the Anganwadi workers struggled due to inadequate training, lack of resources and insufficient compensation. However, her detailed reports, highlighting these urgent issues, were dismissed by the superiors, who labelled them as "alarmist." Frustrated, but undeterred, Aanya decided to delve deeper into the matter.

Her investigations revealed that the funds allocated for these essential services were being misused at various stages of the supply chain, from manufacturing to distribution. Instead of enhancing the service delivery, her complaints merely prompted further resistance and cover-ups from those involved in corruption. Aanya was advised, due to her status as a new officer, to maintain silence if she desired opportunities for career growth and influence.

Despite the discouragement and opposition she faced, Aanya refused to waver in her pursuit of transparency and accountability to address the root problems. Nevertheless, the bureaucracy and political entanglements proved insurmountable. Her colleagues, threatened by her idealism and dedication, responded

with hostility. Eventually, Aanya was transferred to an obscure role that offered no avenue for driving change. Her faith in the system, in which she had entered with a commitment to serve the public good, was shattered. However, the plight of the children, whose rights and futures were denied, remained a constant concern in her thoughts. **(250 words)**

- What dilemmas did Aanya face as a reformer within a rigid bureaucratic structure?
- What are the ethical issues involved in the mismanagement of the funds and essential services meant to aid the most vulnerable groups?
- Should she now remain silent to maintain her position and future opportunities for action, or should she raise awareness of vital hard truths? Is there a middle ground?
- What policy, governance and societal changes are needed to prevent such failures?

**ANS.**

**(a) The key dilemmas Aanya faced**

- Speak up about the mismanagement and corruption she uncovered or stay silent to protect her career.
- Work within the system for gradual change or publicly push for radical reform and transparency.
- Prioritise her career and future opportunities to help from within or take a stand on principle against injustice.

**(b) Ethical issues involved in mismanagement of funds and essential services**

- **Denial of rights and dignity** : Mismanagement deprives Vulnerable groups of rights and dignity.
- **Exploitation and injustice** : Misuse of funds/poor standards exploit vulnerable groups who rely on these services as lifelines.
- **Lack of integrity and accountability** : violation of fiduciary responsibility.
- **Neglect and marginalization** : Poor standards and denial of access to funds and essential services further marginalize and oppress vulnerable groups.
- **Quality of Service Delivery** gets compromised, affecting the intended beneficiaries.

- **Violation of public trust** – leading to erosion of probity, withdrawal of consent under the social contract etc

**(c) Aanya faces difficult choices. However, there might be a middle ground she can consider**

**Remaining Silent** maintains her position and future opportunities for action but compromises her values and integrity.

**Raising Awareness** brings attention to urgent issues and corruption. However, she faces potential retaliation.

**Middle Ground:** Aanya can consider a more strategic approach:

- Seek support from like-minded individuals within the system who share her concerns.
- Engage with external stakeholders such as civil society organizations, media, and the public to create awareness and garner support.

- Document her findings and experiences.
- Explore legal avenues to expose the wrongdoing.

**(d) Policy, governance and societal changes needed to prevent such failures include**

- **Policy:** Strict anti-corruption policies, participatory policy-making, protecting whistle-blowers to increase transparency and accountability in fund usage. Independent audits, public disclosures.
- **Governance:** View public as partners, Engage with and involve beneficiaries in decisions, monitoring implementation. Publish data, accounts, reports and engage openly with media.

**Societal:** Civic participation to demand accountability. Support and amplify the voices of conscience and moral courage speaking truth with compassion to better our world. Back activists and civil society upholding rights and justice, not just self-interests.

## **PART THREE**

# **ESSAYS OF THE MONTH**

**Selected essays from Rau's GSI students**

# YOU CANNOT HAVE PEACE WITHOUT SECURITY AND YOU CANNOT HAVE SECURITY WITHOUT INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT

#PHILOSOPHICAL

SUBMITTED BY: MEGHNA CHAKRAVORTY

**Disclaimer:** The viewpoints in the topic are strictly personal of the writer above. The role of Rau's IAS Study Circle is to present the write-up in its original form, hence the study circle neither endorses nor rejects any viewpoint in the submission. The purpose is only to showcase the manner of writing.

Therefore, it is the sole responsibility of the reader to use his/her intellect to check the veracity of viewpoints.



When one thinks of France, the usual mental image is that of a developed state and a population living in peace and prosperity. One could imagine a stroll down the Champs-Élysées on a lazy Sunday or the Eiffel Tower glittering against the night sky. However, over the last few weeks, starkly different images of France have been broadcast to screens around the world. Riots have erupted in cities all over the country. Angry groups of mostly young protesters demonstrate on streets, clash with the police, and set public property on fire.

These images clearly convey that peace has broken down in French society. However, one must dig a little deeper to uncover the legitimate insecurity that precipitated into violence. The killing of a teenager of Algerian descent in a lower-income suburb of Paris by a police officer prompted an eruption of public anger. It turned the spotlight on the common incidents of police brutality, especially against racial minorities. The protesters feel that minorities live under a constant threat to their lives. A great democratic republic and an advanced nation in the economy like France has not been able to guarantee the basic security of life itself.

This inadequacy has, in turn, been a result of the failure to promote inclusive development in which all groups and regions can have a stake. Migration has made European states far more multicultural than they historically have been. France, like many others, has not risen to the

challenge. Its shortcomings in inclusive development, which also imply equal protection of the law, have bred insecurity of life and in circumstances and opportunities. The absence of security has led to social unrest and the breakdown of peace.

The present situation in France is an important cautionary tale about the need to ensure that the elements of inclusive development, security, and peace go together. They are like links in a chain – each one is only as strong or as weak as the other links are. This essay will explore each of these concepts in turn and demonstrate the linkages between them.

Peace is a condition of general harmony and tranquility in society in which all people can develop their capacities freely, and society attains well-being overall.

Peace would be elusive in the absence of security, and security in this regard must be considered as a multi-dimensional concept. Traditionally, security has only been thought of in terms of external security and the removal of the threat of war and aggression.

External security is definitely an important component. The developmental agenda of newly independent India was often derailed on account of threats from its hostile neighbors. One of the very first tasks of the first cabinet under Nehru was not to prepare a roadmap for societal well-being but to prepare for and fight a war. The Third Five-Year Plan was a complete failure due to the outbreak of two wars.

Leaders have attempted to promote security from external threats in different ways. Nehru saw Panchsheel and peaceful co-existence with China as the only long-term solution for peace. Later, India developed nuclear weapons and a principal Nuclear Doctrine to bring about peace through deterrence.



However, security is now understood multi-dimensionally. Human security incorporates internal security threats, political-economic, and social security as well. For example, India is not at war with any state now. Nevertheless, terror attacks remain a concern that disrupts social harmony, weakens government institutions, and stymies the business investment climate. The ongoing violence in Manipur has claimed over a hundred lives. The supply of essential commodities, the ability of people to use public roads, travel freely, and work, have all been affected. Social insecurity between ethnic and tribal groups has spiraled and destroyed peace.

Peace was also destroyed in Sri Lanka last year when huge crowds thronged the streets in a popular, mass uprising that prompted President Rajapaksa to flee his own country. This administrative breakdown was brought about by a debilitating economic crisis that shattered the security of balanced household budgets, purchasing power, and access to essential goods, services, and energy.

Yet another one of our South Asian neighbors, Pakistan, has not seen the face of peace in a long while. Security is threatened by a weak political ecosystem – one in which democratic institutions are not independent, and leaders acquire power only with the tacit approval of the military. Security demands consistency and a peaceful transfer of power based on the popular mandate. The dramatic visuals of Imran Khan's supporters breaching the military headquarters betray the absence of both security and thereby peace.

Thus, it is now understood that security offers the foundation for peace. The latter cannot be achieved if the former is not guaranteed. What is the solution to this conundrum? It lies in inclusive development.

Inclusive development fosters the life opportunities, well-being of all sections today, and considers future generations as well. It incorporates both economic viability as well as equity and sustainability. It is what Rabindranath Tagore imagined when he said – “where the

world has not been broken into fragments by narrow domestic walls.”

Tagore's emphasis on universal humanism is the broader approach that is needed. Countries like France claim that they face security challenges today because of illegal migration. The truth is something else. For centuries, colonialism left countries impoverished and left legacy issues that breed instability (Israel – Palestine); regime change interventions aimed to topple governments (US in Nicaragua) and wars against terror were begun but for resources (Iraq intervention). These are all signs that global inclusive development has not been on the agenda, and geopolitics is considered a zero-sum game. Thus, when many Algerians move to France for a better life, security challenges come up.

In the Indian context, PM Manmohan Singh had referred to 'Left-Wing Extremism' as the biggest security challenge. It is not purely a law-and-order issue but one of imbalanced regional development, resource extraction without adequate consultation, and poverty fueling violence. Thus, the solution is again in inclusive development.

As Martin Luther King has said, 'Peace is not merely the absence of war, it is the presence of justice.' Hence, although the goal is to realize and entrench peace in society, the path to it is through security and begins with inclusive development and justice, the highest ideal.

Inclusive development requires us to promote fraternity and collaboration to meet our common ends. In this regard, the small Pacific Island nation of Vanuatu has much to teach us. It has led a UN resolution for ensuring climate justice.

Such cooperation for shared interest is inclusive development that prioritizes the security of even the smallest stakeholders like Vanuatu, which face an existential threat. This creates trust, and trust can lead to a humanity that coexists in peace and strives for mutual progress.

# IF YOU WANT THE RAINBOW, YOU GOT TO PUT UP WITH THE RAIN.

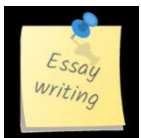
#PHILOSOPHICAL

SUBMITTED BY: SAMIKSHA DWIVEDI

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**"Earth provides for every man's needs but not for every man's greed" – Mahatma Gandhi**



India was gradually colonized by the British since 1757. She underwent economic destruction, complete subjugation of her citizens, and utter exploitation. However, our great leaders like Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, and Mahatma Gandhi patiently withstood the rains of exploitation while demanding freedom, and after 190 years, a rainbow in the form of India's independence on 15th August 1947 emerged.

Rains are often associated with inconvenience, struggle, and hardship. They can be correlated with the obstacles faced in the journey to reach a desirable outcome. This favorable result is metaphorized as a 'rainbow,' signifying the culmination of a journey that fills us with the pleasant feeling of reaching a destination.

The essay 'If you want the rainbow, you've got to put up with the rain' explores why 'rains' are important to reach the rainbow, how to endure such rains, and how 'rains' are themselves a good thing in the journey.

The importance of struggles and obstacles in life lies in the quest to find purpose. The 'rains' in life provide a new perception and dimension of thinking, making life meaningful while providing zeal to make a difference in the world.

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar faced discrimination based on caste since his childhood. The difficulties and ostracization he faced motivated him to take up the cause of lower castes in India, fighting for their educational opportunities and political empowerment. His efforts were rewarded with the 'rainbow' of adequate representation for the vulnerable through the Indian Constitution.

The 'rains' in our life also push people out of their comfort zones, motivating them to try new paths and seek new opportunities. It is said that 'in the middle of adversity lies great opportunity.' Adversities provide new directions that manifest even brighter rainbows.

Brian Acton and Jan Koum had already quit their jobs at Yahoo and were also rejected by Facebook. However, they began working on the idea of internet management applications with instant messaging. And thus, the widely used 'WhatsApp Inc.' was born, which was later bought for millions by Facebook.

The rains also provide an opportunity for growth. The destruction caused by rains makes us build more resilient foundations. Similarly, the hardships faced in the journey help us make better decisions in our lives for better outcomes.

India's 1990 economic crisis is well known. The protectionist economy based on import substitution was on the verge of collapse. However, India implemented 'Liberalization, Privatization, and Globalization' reforms in response to the 'rains of economic downturn,' which were rewarded with the 'rainbow' of being titled the 'Fastest growing economy of the world in 2023.' India built a better foundation for the economy with reforms and gave a push to service-based jobs.

Finally, the rains provide a solution-oriented approach to people, pushing them to develop innovative approaches to problems at hand. They stimulate research and development to provide betterment and development in a holistic and sustainable manner.

Presently, we face the 'rains' of climate change, owing to consistent anthropogenic interference in nature. This ubiquitous threat has pushed everyone – individuals, experts, nations, and organizations – to seek solutions to issues like plastics, circular economy, electric vehicles, and ethanol blending. Efforts are being made to surpass these challenges to see the 'rainbow of sustainable development.'

After seeing why rains necessarily prelude the rainbow, the question arises of how to endure these 'rains.' The hurdles in the pathway bring uncertainty, demotivation, and desperation, capable of inducing negativity. For individuals, it could kill their potential and lead to a suboptimal life, causing strife and conflicts in society and internationally.

Thus, to face these rains, the foremost requirement is perseverance, inducing the subject to persist despite hardships. Mahatma Gandhi withdrew the non-cooperation movement at its peak. He faced criticism and despondence but persevered in the rains because he knew that the right time to demand India's freedom would come.

Another need is motivation, providing rationality to face those rains to see the rainbow. J. K. Rowling had visited 10 publishers before her bestseller Harry Potter was published, yet she was motivated to visit the eleventh publisher.

'Dedication' is another driving force, meaning devotion to a particular cause. Nelson Mandela was dedicated to eliminating apartheid in South Africa, knowing that the 'rainbow' of an equal society was worth thirty years of his

life, dedicating himself to the cause of the dignity of Blacks in Africa.

Lastly, 'courage of conviction' is another dimension to face the hurdles in the journey, standing upright for your goals despite opposition. It makes enduring the rain for the right causes' worth it, just like India endured international sanctions post Pokhran Nuclear Tests. India stood by her stance and was rewarded with a civil nuclear deal with America in 2005.

Till now, the analysis has been based on tolerating rains for a particular motive, that is, to see the rainbow. However, not every rain is followed by the rainbow. But it does not mean enduring the rain was worthless.

The 'rains' also signify the journey of learning and improvements. A goal-oriented mindset is good, but so is the means-oriented mindset. The struggle in the life of any entity teaches it valuable lessons. It is often said that we learn more from failures than success.

Thomas Alva Edison failed to make the bulb 999 times, but according to him, he learned how not to make a bulb 999 times. Thus, the focus should be more on the journey and learning from struggle rather than the result of struggle.

We often focus most on the rainbow, an outcome, and assume its attainment as the panacea of our struggle. However, the rainbow itself is an illusion. The achievement of a goal does not imply the end of the rains. It is only the end of one episode and the start of another. Thus, any entity should enjoy the 'rains' in its journey, derive lessons, and view any fruits or results of it with positive connotations, as even if it does not give the pleasure of a rainbow, it will always push forward to a pleasant weather after-rain."

# NOT ALL THOSE WHO WANDER ARE LOST

#PHILOSOPHICAL

SUBMITTED BY: HARSH BHARADWAJ

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"When Elon Musk earned millions of dollars after selling his stakes in his first startup, he chose to invest the money in two of his new startups. While his first company aimed to

explore the possibility of creating the best electric vehicles, a mission abandoned by other vehicle-making giants such as Toyota, his other company aimed to commercialize space travel and possibly establish human civilization on Mars. While people thought he had lost himself by venturing into these risky ventures, he proved to the world that not all who wander are lost by making both of his companies successful.

So, what makes Musk different from a usual lost wanderer? It's the goal that he aimed for and his dedication to pursue it. If we look at history, we can find several examples like Siddhartha, who left his royal family to explore the world and find the truth. He wasn't a lost wanderer; he wandered across the northern kingdoms of India with the goal of enlightening himself with the truth. Ultimately, he gained enlightenment and became Buddha, worshipped by billions in the future.

When Columbus and Vasco Da Gama went on voyages to explore the oceans and find India, they weren't lost. They wandered with the goal of finding an alternative sea route to India to benefit traders. Ultimately, while Da Gama reached Calicut (India), Columbus discovered America. This set the stage for the formation of new colonies of European powers, the rise in global trade, and the spread of local culture across seas. Thus, these two sea wanderers established a whole new world order.

So, is a determined goal enough to make a lost wanderer successful? The answer is obviously "No". If Columbus had lost his patience while crossing the never-ending Atlantic with a medicinal ship and returned to Europe, there may not have been a United States of America and the global hegemony that it enjoyed for decades.

Not just patience and a determined firm goal, but a lost wanderer also needs perseverance, an able guide or teacher, and a huge amount of hard work without breaking down and slogging through tough periods. The recent conflict between Russia and Ukraine and the breakdown of the world order is a perfect example of such tough periods. Countries need to navigate through this period with a goal of global peace by engaging in dialogue and diplomacy, as demonstrated by India.

India, with its dual goal of global peace and strategic autonomy, has been vocal about following the UN Charter, promoting a rule-based world, as evident from the recent message of PM Modi that this is not an era of war. While aligning with Western powers through initiatives such as QUAD, I2U2, and logistics agreements like LEMOA with the U.S., India has balanced it with the other party of the war by cooperating on SCO, BRICS, and logistic agreements like RELOS with Russia. While this may seem like wandering in India's foreign policy, it has ensured India's strategic autonomy, as demonstrated by increasing purchases of Russian oil and gas without being sanctioned by Western powers, assuring sustained economic growth and controlled inflation. Furthermore, the theme of "One Earth, One Family, One Future" of the G20, presided over by India currently, pushes towards the goal of global peace.

Similarly, if we look at the internal state of economic affairs of India, we can observe that India has been navigating with varying fiscal and monetary policies, with targets set by the FRBM Act and RBI respectively. While the FRBM Act sets a target of 60% of the GDP for total debt, with 40% for the center and 20% for states, and a fiscal deficit target of 3% with a 0.5% relaxation in case of war,



structural reforms, etc., the RBI has set an inflation target of  $4 \pm 2\%$ . With the recent setback caused by COVID-19, the debt crossed 6%, and inflation has also crossed the 6% limit for months continuously. This made the government's fiscal and monetary policies seem lost, but with heavy slogging during the tough period, the macro-economic conditions have moved towards safety. While the goal has not been reached yet, sustained economic growth and a positive Growth-Investment rate differential make the situation much better.

The same holds true for the welfare policies of the Indian government, which has been striving to achieve the 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) set by the UN by 2030. For instance, to achieve SDG-1 (No Poverty), India implemented the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) to provide livelihoods to people who lost their jobs due to COVID-19. For SDG-2 (Zero Hunger), India implemented the National Food Security Act to provide food at minimal prices to more than 66% of its total population.

With heavy expenditure, it may seem like India became a lost wanderer, but it achieved the required safety nets while reducing expenditure on these policies as the economy opened after the lockdown with a surge in new jobs and heavy FDI inflows.

Thus, we have seen that wandering with a set goal and persevering during tough periods prevents getting lost. But is that all? Is not getting lost the whole purpose of wandering? The answer is again "No". Wandering into new domains has led to new discoveries, inventions, and overall progress. Now, wandering into unseen areas has been formalized by setting up Research and Development Institutes, startups, etc. It not only helps us build and discover new things but also provides safety during crises, as demonstrated by the quicker-than-expected development of vaccines for COVID-19 and the development of newer, more precise vaccine technologies such as DNA vaccines, mRNA vaccines, etc.

Similarly, wandering into newer domains also enhances and widens our thinking abilities. Our constituent assembly never thought of Article 21 in the way it is seen now. The continuous wandering by Supreme Court constitutional benches has led to the interpretation of "life and liberty" to include various rights such as the Right to Privacy (Puttaswamy Judgement), Right to a pollution-free environment (multiple MC Mehta cases), Right to travel abroad (Maneka Gandhi Case), and the realization that the procedure established by law to restrict life and liberty must be fair and proportional, thus effecting due process of law (Maneka Gandhi judgement). While the continuous appeals to these judgments may make it seem like the S.C. was a lost wanderer, the effects these judgments have brought in the political rights of persons have expanded the social contract.

But does wandering always result in a positive result? The answer is "no". Even when the goal is positive, it may backfire, such as Sri Lanka's wandering to pursue organic farming leading to political and economic instability. But when the goal itself is negative, the wandering may result in disastrous results, as evident from the political wandering of Pakistan, leading to a rise in resolution, loss of peace, economic instability, and so on, even after becoming an early nuclear power. Often, a positive result of wandering can be used as a negative means, such as the development of nuclear energy, biotechnology, which can be used to manufacture nuclear bombs and bioweapons.

Thus, it can be concluded that not all who wander are lost, especially if they have a fixed goal, perseverance, and the ability to work hard. But one must not wander into domains that are harmful, such as pursuing a career that is stressful, causing mental health issues leading sometimes to extreme steps of suicides. As it has been said, "A fish must not be judged by its ability to climb a tree." Thus, mindful wandering with a set of targets can prevent one from getting lost."

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